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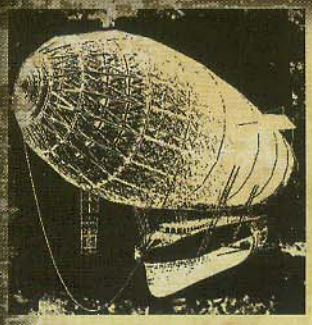

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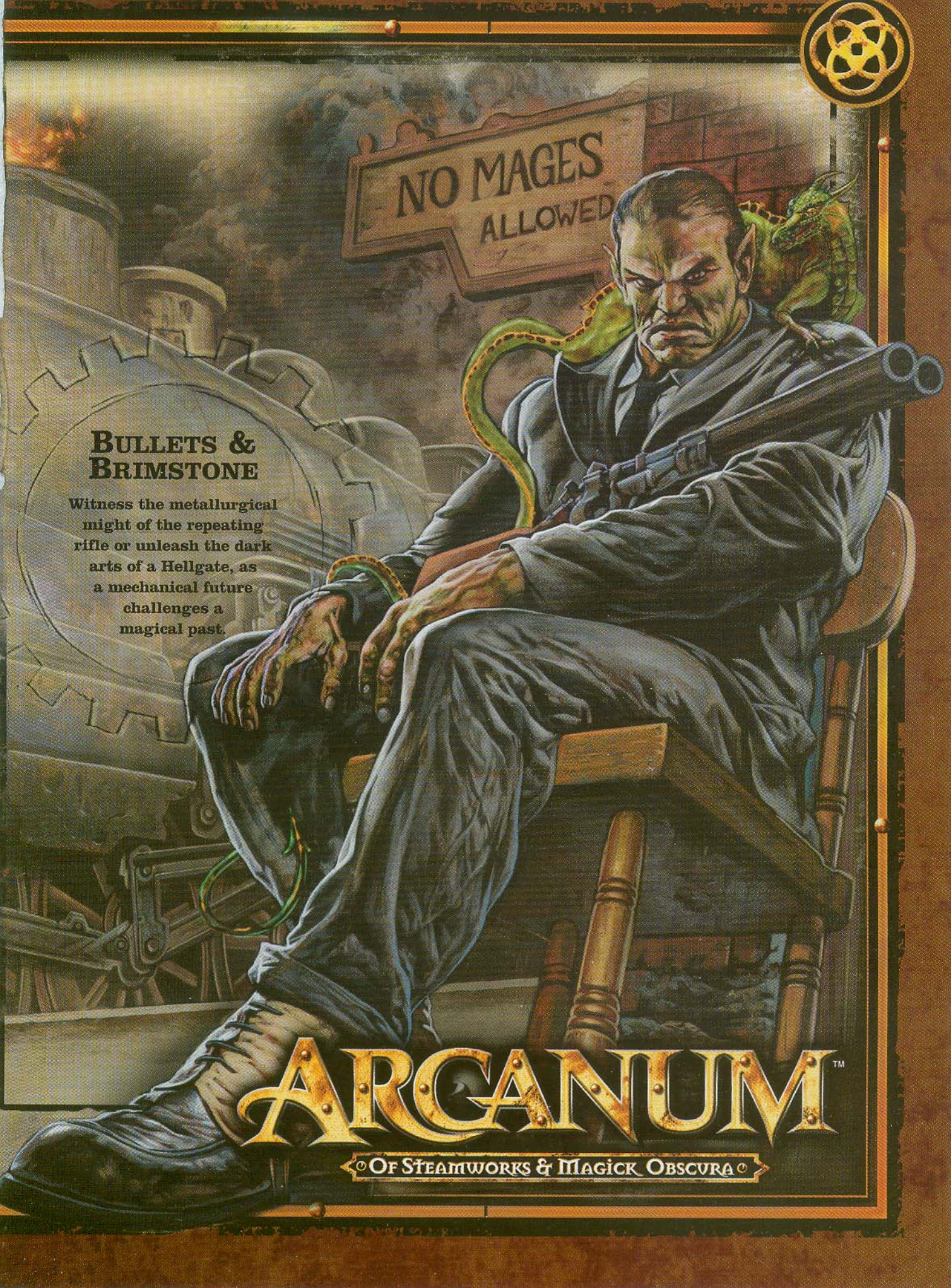
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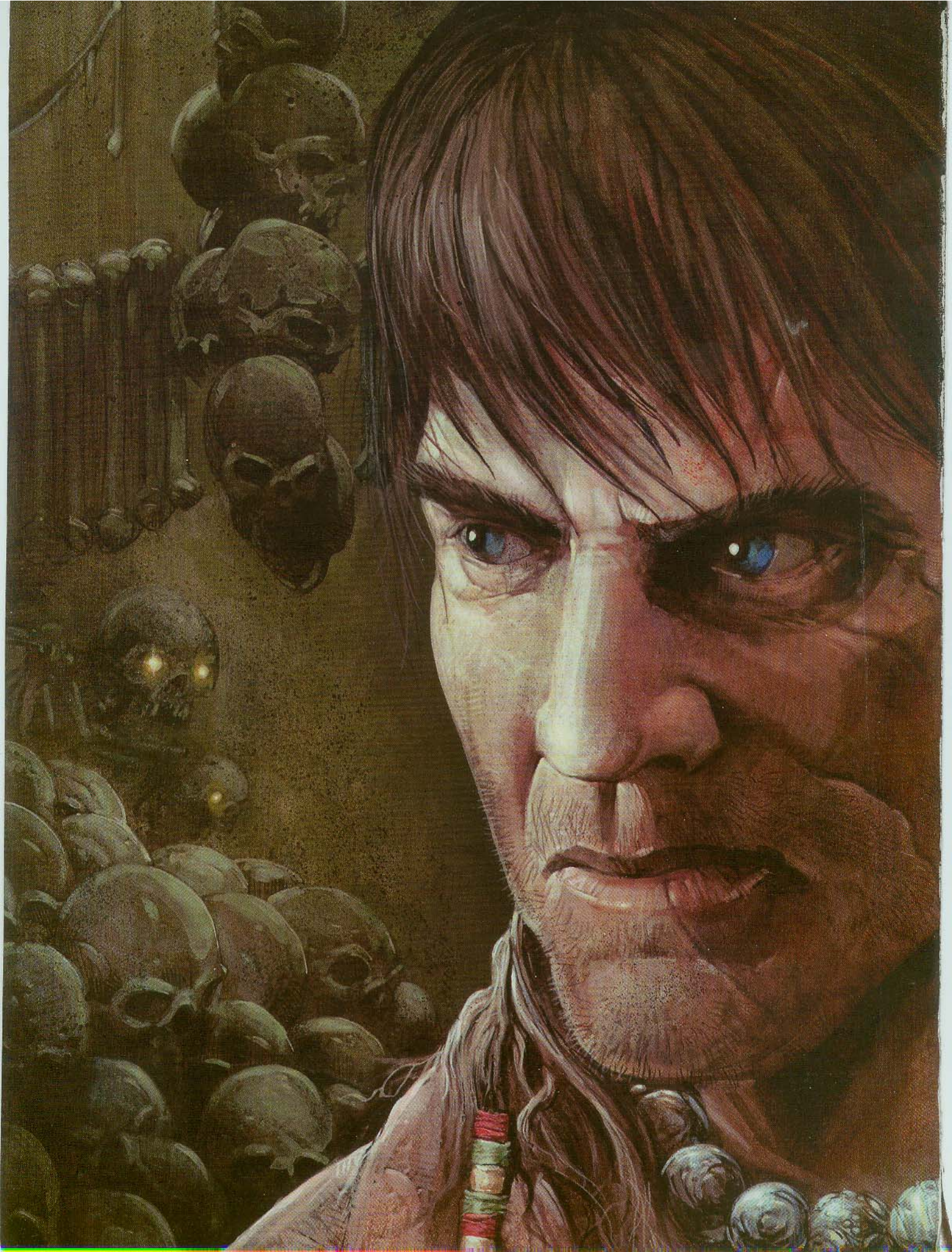

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Volume XXV, Number 5
October 2000

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In any surprising encounter there is that magical moment when you just realize that something is not right, but you don't have enough information to figure out exactly what's wrong yet. It's that split-second of dread and adrenaline that cover artist Carl Critchlow captures in the battle-hardened visage of this experienced dungeon crawler.

—Peter Whitley, Art Director

There's No Such Thing as a Bad Dream

Have you ever had a real nightmare? I'm not talking about a bad falling dream that you only vaguely remember come morning. I'm talking about a dream that wakes you up in the middle of the night in a cold sweat, shaking under your covers with the sure knowledge that some gruesome beast is about to leap from your closet and disembowel you with its talons.

I'm convinced that the more active our imaginations, the more likely we are to have nightmares. If so, that would mean that gamers, being more imaginative than average, have more nightmares. You might not know what spurs on this dark side of your mind, but you know that every once in a while your brain grabs hold of something and won't let it go until it's given you a good scare.

Have you ever had a nightmare, woken up in the middle of the night, and rushed to write your dream down, because you knew it would make a great adventure? How many times have you used the monster under the bed to get your players on the edge of their seats? How many times have you added details like the oozing sores and dripping gore of a creature from your darkest dreams to a new monster to evoke a feeling of horrific disgust from a group of adventurers?

Some people would say that you shouldn't dwell on these darker impulses, that you should lock them away some place where they'll never see the light of day. I say, why waste such a great resource! There's no better place to go for adventure ideas than your subconscious. And what better place to vent those dark images than in a game of fantasy?

Once I had a nightmare that I woke up and everyone else in the world had disappeared. I wandered the streets of my town, but no one was to be found. I can distinctly remember my feelings of fear and abandonment. When I finally awoke, I quickly wrote the dream down before the images faded. About a year later, while preparing to run a new campaign, I came across those scrawled notes and was inspired to throw my characters into the same situation. What would they do if they woke up one morning to find that every other living creature had suddenly vanished? I decided that in the game, an evil sorcerer had cast an enchantment over a large area of the campaign world that made everyone invisible to everyone else. Only physical contact with another living creature would break the enchantment, and then only temporarily.

It might not seem too horrifying to some, but my players were sure freaked out. After a few days of the silence, their characters were ready to bolt and leave town, only to discover a second enchantment that prevented anyone from leaving. Meanwhile, I was sending bands of assassins, both monstrous and mundane, at the PCs, as they were practically the only ones trying to end the enchantment, and the evil sorcerer was tracking their every move.

You can imagine their relief when they finally tracked the sorcerer back to his lair and defeated him. As I described the rush of normal town noise that flooded in through the windows, everyone sat back and visibly relaxed.

People often recommend that DMs steal liberally from popular movies, books, and even other games to make their jobs easier. That's all well and good, but I also recommend that you steal liberally from yourself. Add a good dollop of horror, a dash of suspense, mix well in your brain, and see what dreams may come.

Chris Thomasson • Associate Editor

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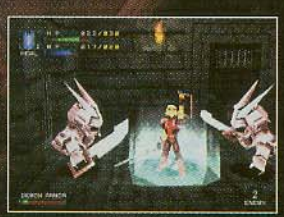

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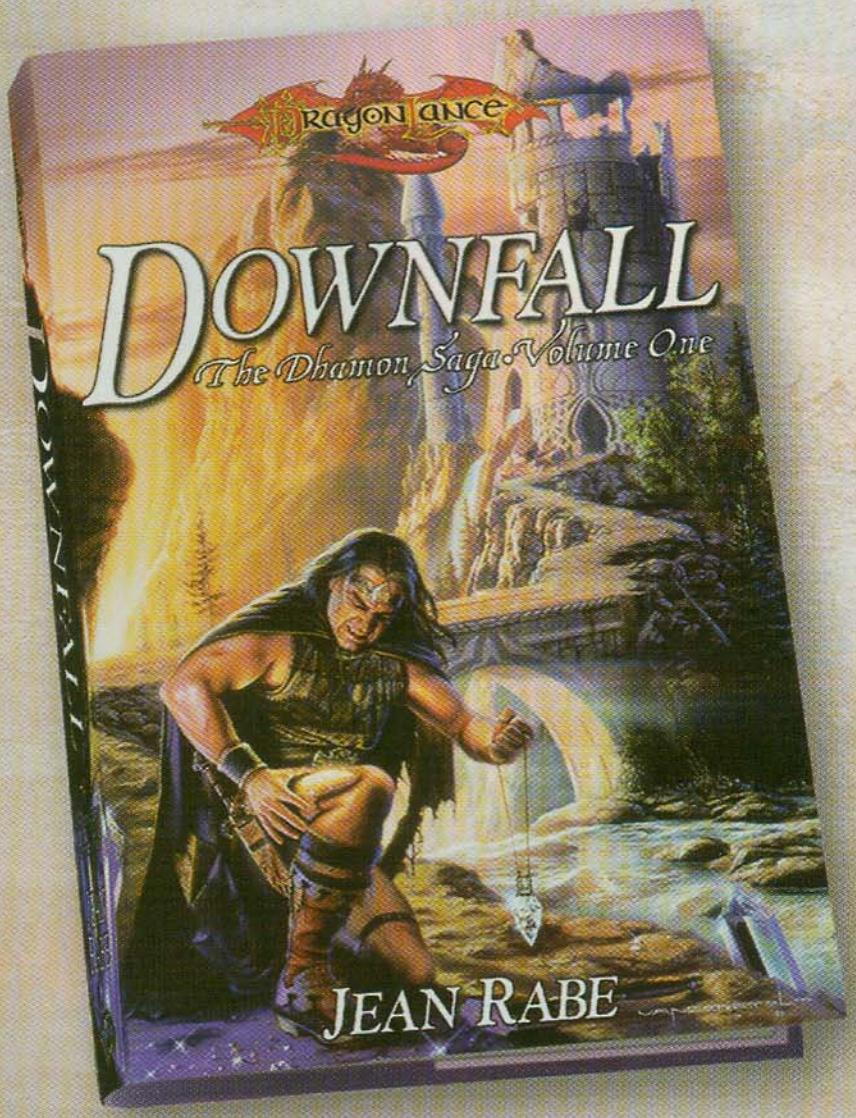

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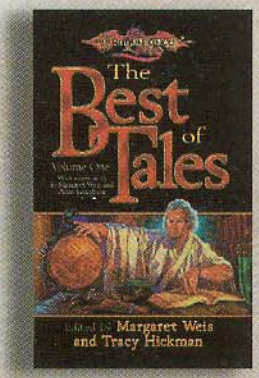

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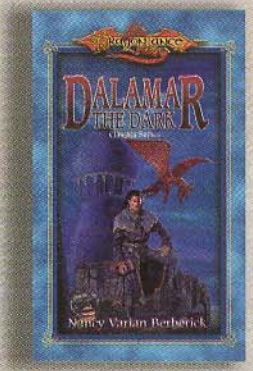

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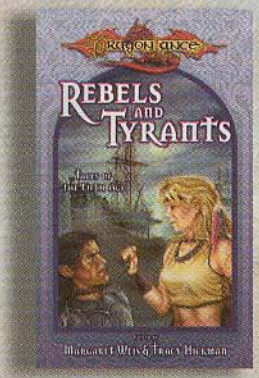

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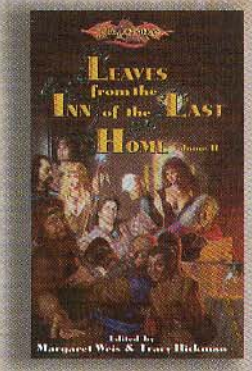

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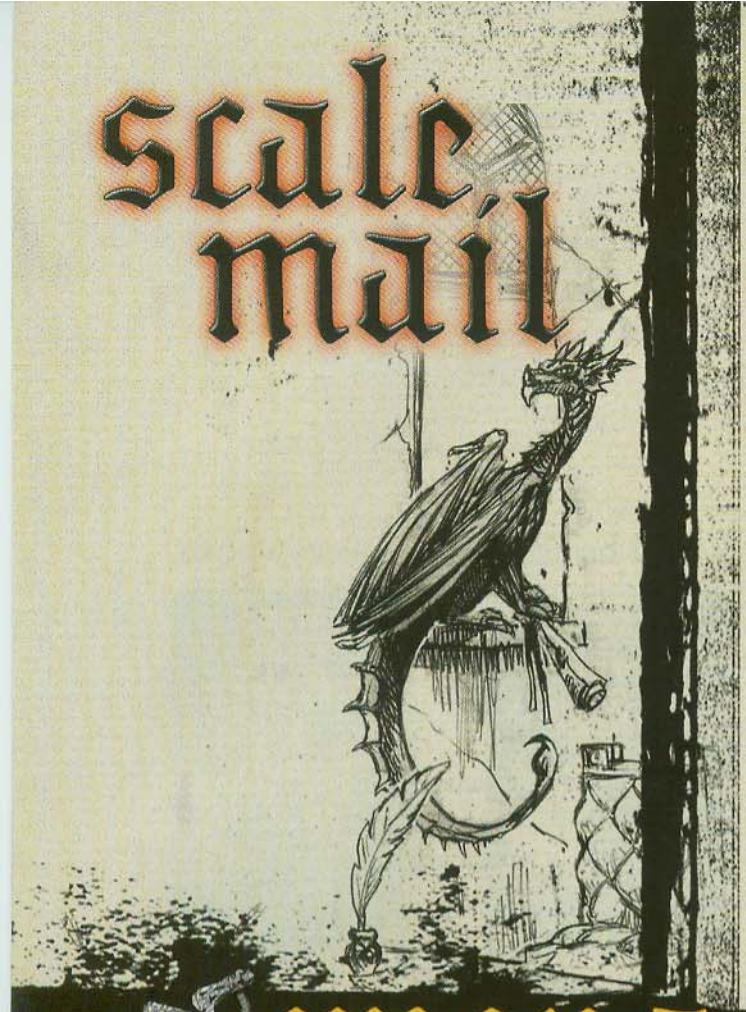

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Our August facelift elicited a lot of mail, not to mention plenty of survey responses. We peeked at the first batch of surveys from issue #274 to see that most readers (67.5%) think the new look is an improvement, while a smaller group (19%) prefers the older look.

Most who wrote letters about the new design liked some elements but wanted others changed. Right now, Pete's parsing through your feedback and deciding how to incorporate improvements to the look for this issue. Let us know what you think of the refinements each month.

upon a soapbox

gary gygax

BOB the Warrior

Time to admit something. Lack of theatrics, and some theatrical performance, in a roleplaying game tends to make me want to go bowling. Well, not quite, but it is quite dull to play nothing but hack-and-slash dungeon crawls with a group that consists of Bob the Warrior, the Rogue With No Name, George the Holy, and Axebeard the Dwarf with 21 strength and no playing skill whatsoever. Of course, I spring to the defense of those who love this form of gaming. Yes, I think that "munchkins" are unduly and unfairly maligned. Hack-and-slashers and power gamers are having fun, so leave them alone. I try to—literally.

When I run a campaign of any sort, I do my best to offer the whole gamut of the roleplaying experience. The players are encouraged to interact with NPCs. Involvement in master-servant relationships, peer interaction, politics, religion, intrigue, local community affairs, historical events, economic enterprises, and development of power bases (minor or great) are always options. Along with exploration, information gathering, problem solving, and combat, these facets are what makes the game form so fulfilling and always fresh. I think of it as real life with none of the actual drawbacks and all of the impossibles possible, if played well. Of course this interpretation might mean different things in different milieus, but the general sense remains. Focusing solely on one aspect of play tends to be tedious to all. The now-in-vogue overemphasis on story and thespian activity is likely reactionary, stemming from so much over-use of the "you must save the world from doom" theme. That and the "lets find some monsters and kill and loot them" settings for too many campaigns are indeed sufficient to evoke a desire for something more fulfilling.

When new young players are involved, the hack & slash theme will be paramount. Not only is this basic and satisfying to most such neophytes, it avoids their obvious shortcomings. Being inexperienced in life as well as in

What the Doctor Ordered

Let me register my support for the correspondent who lamented the decline in humor over the years. I always loved the zaniness of the April issues, especially the silly magic items and the character and monster profiles for cartoon figures. Now that's all gone, and the "April Fool's" issue for the past couple of years is but a ghost of its former self. Please bring back the old format!

Also, I'm delighted to see that "Dragonmirth" hasn't vanished after all. Its absence last month provoked cries of outrage in our household. We're also enjoying the resurrected "What's New," which I always liked. And this month's "Dork Tower" made me laugh out loud.

Long ago, you had a feature called (I think) "Giants in the Earth," making D&D characters out of fictional and legendary figures. Could these be brought back?

While I'm writing, I'd like to comment on the appearance of the magazine. I was glad to see the recent change to a more readable typeface. But now the current issue displays a truly dismaying development—varicolored pages. Have pity on the readers who get eyestrain from trying to decipher words on blue or brown backgrounds. It's not quite so bad as Web pages that use fancy color schemes, but it's in the same general category. We don't want the text portion of the articles to be flashy—we want them to be legible! That brings me to the footnotes in the "Ecology" articles. I can understand why you changed from endnotes to footnotes (although I was perfectly happy with the former). But did you have to decrease the type size of the notes? Though I'm interested in the footnoted information, I usually don't read much of it because peering at that small font is a tiring struggle.

Another layout point: Please, please restore the issue number to the front cover. A small 3-digit number on the spine isn't enough. This new format will make it much harder to find a desired issue quickly in a pile on the shelf. We've subscribed to *Dragon* since the late 1970s, resulting in a lot of issues to search through. We try to keep them in chronological order, but people are not always completely careful.

If you're interested in demographics, I'm 52, with a Ph.D. in English, and my husband is a 54-year-old career naval officer. I discovered D&D through the 1st Edition manuals in the mid-'70s, I introduced him to the concept, and we taught our kids to play so we would have someone to game with. We learned completely from the books and never played with anyone outside the family until years later.

Anyway, keep up the good work! Give us plenty of monsters, "Ecologies," humor, background articles, and so on. Don't listen to those dreary purists who seem to think the magazine's focus should become progressively more and more narrow.

Margaret L. Carter • Annapolis, MD

After years of trying to balance the silly with the serious in April, we'll throw caution to the wind next April and be completely silly. Well, almost completely silly. Let's say "mostly silly."

Expect more "Giants in the Earth" articles in the next six months.

We're still a few years away from a large print edition, but when a few more of the staff receive their AARP cards, we'll be all over it. In the meantime, Pete has promised to bump up the size of the footnotes slightly. Now if we could just get him to turn down that blasted music and stop leaving his skateboard in the hall ...

... and speaking of punks ...

gaming, they are not as able to manage the more complex aspects of the roleplaying game. How can most young people "play a role" when they aren't even sure who *they* are yet? Lacking the knowledge of the real world that more mature participants have, they find themselves at a great disadvantage in regards to problem solving, politics, and all the rest. Also, what seems "old hat" to the veteran gamer is likely new and exciting to the youngster just getting into things.

Is the best DM for a group of young players one of their own? My first choice is a patient older person who can mentor the group, get them to be less self-conscious about roleplaying, and encourage the lot to read and learn about everything, and apply it to their real life and to gaming collaterally. Engendering roleplaying through vivid DMing is most probable with a mature "director," if you will, than with a youngster in that role. The peer of the player group as the DM most likely means that the learning and play-style curves will be longer, possibly the latter not much of a "curve" at all. As in life, the well-rounded PC is one of many parts, one who engages in all manner of things, not merely slaying monsters.

I think of [D&D] as real life with none of the actual drawbacks ...

It is a fact that many groups of older gamers still enjoy a fairly basic, action-oriented style of roleplaying game. They know how to add the other elements of the game form to their campaign but choose to do so in limited fashion. This is acceptable, for it is their way of enjoying themselves, and no one can rightfully dismiss that as being wrong or immature. One can, though, choose to employ a somewhat more complex mix of elements for their own play. I certainly do my best to present the whole spectrum, but in the end it is up to the players. The old saw about leading a horse to water applies here. Many is the time I have virtually ground my teeth in frustration at the lack of desire in a group of "mature" and experienced players to go much beyond the basics of the heroic quest.

So to "Bob the Warrior" and all his ilk, I say: Maybe you should pay a bit more attention to producing a dramatic tale through theatrical performance—or at least a measure of theatrics—in your gaming. You can do that without substantive loss to the action and can actually *enhance* that aspect by having a counter to it. Try it and see!

Good—Except for the Punks ...

First of all let me commend you on the excellent job which you have performed in maintaining the quality of *Dragon Magazine*. In my opinion, at least, it has not really improved—it was always very good—but you have done a splendid job of maintaining its high standard. Bravo!

Actually, to qualify the above statement, there has been some improvement in certain aspects of the magazine. The artwork has risen again from a nadir of cheapness a few years ago, and the stories are more enjoyable than the poor efforts of former years, which were written either at a sixth-grade level, laded with maudlin angst, or both. Some of the ongoing themes are very creative and well-handled, such as the "Sheen" articles—which I hope there will be more of soon.

There is one thing that alarms me, though, and that is the future of the magazine's artwork. The samples of 3rd Edition art in the "Countdown" articles has gone from unpleasant to appalling. A cigar-smoking wizard was bad enough, but the sorcerer and bard in issue #273 were close to unspeakable. "Punks in dungeons" is not what I, at least, want to see in your magazine. I realize that the costume in *Dragon*'s artwork only approximates medieval costume sometimes, but the garb depicted in #273 was ludicrous and squalid—not to mention the sorcerer's hair. When I look in the magazine, I want to think of high and noble adventure, not garbage-filled alleys, graffiti, boom boxes, and switchblades. Please don't pull *Dragon Magazine* down to mere "dungeonpunk."

One final word: "Up on a Soapbox" is erudite and thoughtful. Please thank Mr. Gygax for writing this entertaining column. Well, I guess I've had my rant, so I'll let someone else have theirs. Adieu, adventure fans, and thanks again for the great magazine!

Rhian Hunt • Port Wing, WI

We'll print almost any letter with the word "erudite" in it. It's almost as good as "balderdash." (See last issue's "Scale Mail.") Never fear, however. No more dungeonpunk for us. Next month, we kick them out of the dungeon and onto the gaslit streets for a steampunk feature, along with other fantasy futures articles.

Now, let's shut up for a couple letters and check out more of the specific feedback of the new design.

Wonder of Wonders

The August edition (Issue #274) was a pleasant surprise, to say the least. I love the format (an understatement), and hope that you will continue to print *Dragon Magazine* this way.

What exactly did I love about it? Well, number one, I loved the font you used a lot better than the traditional roman characters. It was obvious to me that there was an emphasis on information in this issue, rather than graphics, although the graphics that were present were superb (another understatement). Perhaps you all have caught on that graphics should be superior in quality, not necessarily quantity.

The articles that were virtually graphics free were perfect; the authors should be congratulated for their high-quality work. I also loved the way that certain columns were placed elegantly beneath one another on the same page. I could tell that a lot of information was condensed into this edition.

To sum up: The information (elegant, succinct, complete), graphics (fun, inspiring, creative), and the general planning of #274 were excellent and I hope you all keep up the good work.

Daniel Bates • Flower Mound, Texas

Frankly, I Do Give a Damn

Some thoughts on the new look of *Dragon Magazine*.

The content was quite good. Gary's "Up on a Soapbox" was a pleasant change of pace, and I hope to see more of this type from him mixed in with his usual fare. The mini-campaign information for Sherwood was well written but doesn't apply to me. All in all, the magazine had all I expected content-wise, and I'm happy with it.

Quite frankly, I was pretty disappointed with the layout and the new style. My knee-jerk reaction was that most of the layout looked like a poorly designed Web page. There are a few exceptions. The article on "Beasts of the Pomarj" was great, as was "Role Models." They looked like what I'd like most of the magazine to reflect. The other articles didn't

profiles

monster master Skip Williams

by michael g. ryan

Skip Williams knows monsters.

Not the Loch Ness Monster, or Bigfoot, or monster truck rallies. Skip knows D&D monsters, and he knows them the way a father knows his children. This Senior Designer at Wizards of the Coast was the chief compiler and designer of the new *Monster Manual*. Along with Jonathan Tweet and Monte Cook, Skip set out to review and revitalize all things in the D&D game that go bump in the night ... or bump in the dungeon, or bump in the ethereal plane or ... You can probably imagine what a monstrous undertaking that was.

Revamping the Vaults

"The first item on the agenda was combing through the game's twenty-year collection of monsters and deciding which ones were going into the book," he explains. "The design team decided to focus on creatures that fit well into classic dungeon-style adventures, with extra emphasis on creatures we felt the game needed." That emphasis included monsters that could be summoned, plenty of animals for druids and rangers, undead monsters for clerics to turn, and various other creatures that "help put character abilities into play."

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By Greg and Tim Hildebrandt

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flow well; sidebars and the other "boxed" text were just plain hard to read. "Dungeoncraft" and "Silicon Sorcery" suffered the least from this layout, but I think that was just luck. Ed Greenwood's article—I'd give the title but you can't read it—looked *really* bad. "Scale Mail," "Up on a Soapbox," and "Profiles" suffered from the very annoying tendency to split articles across multiple pages when there doesn't seem to be any logical reason to do so. The colors and backgrounds for these were not bad at all though. Finally, the contents page was darn easy to read and looked quite nice.

Content: great. Layout: much, much less than great.

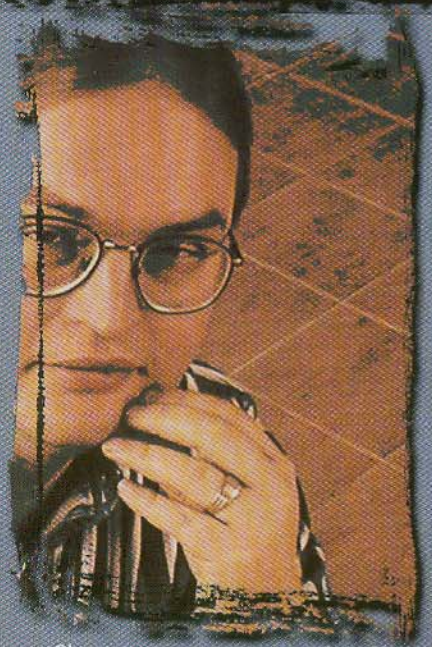
Dave Edens • Madison, AL

If It Weren't for the Content

Congratulations on the excellent new format presented in *Dragon* #274.

After a ten-year hiatus from D&D (I was a miniature wargamer for some time), I started reading *Dragon* again about six months ago in anticipation of the new edition. I was surprised to see *Dragon* very much the same as it was a decade ago. Every month I would devour the 3rd Edition tidbits and wonder what direction *Dragon* was going to take. Well, the short answer is I think *Dragon*'s makeover team outdid itself with #274. The new style is very modern and innovative, and reflects its new dedication to supporting D&D.

However, I have to admit that I was a little let down with the content of #274. After a year of hype and suspense for the new edition, I expected #274 to be almost one giant advertisement for 3E, with article after article explaining the new game, showing off artwork, flaunting its new image, and in general doing its best to get me chomping at the bit to race to the nearest game store and camp out until the *Player's Handbook* arrived. Instead, all we got was one article on the d20 mechanic, an article on playtesters, and an article on prestige classes, even though the *Dungeon Master's Guide* won't be out for another month. Those articles did not promote the game; they assumed we already owned the new *Player's Handbook*. (At the time of writing this letter, the release date is still two weeks away.) Most disappointing of all was the Sherwood Forest campaign—after all the lengths that Wizards of the Coast has gone to to give D&D its own look and fantasy feel, detached from medieval Europe, I was shocked to see this as the first offering from *Dragon* for the new edition. Overall, I felt that *Dragon* did an outstanding job hyping up the new edition over the past issues but did not come close to having the "3rd Edition premiere issue" that I hoped for.



If "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?" used all D&D 3rd Edition questions, what would the million-dollar question be?

"Any question that just couldn't be answered in earlier editions of the game.
What's the chance that an elf can surprise a barbarian?
How fast can a dwarf move when wearing plate armor?
Or how about, what happens to a lich when it casts a *wish* spell?"

—Skip Williams

Skip is not exaggerating when he says the design team looked under every rock for monsters. "I pretty much looked at every creature ever printed under the AD&D logo," he admits, noting that monsters printed in the amateur press were deliberately skipped. This left an enormous menagerie of monsters to choose from, and the editing process had to begin somewhere.

"You won't see brownies in the new *Monster Manual*," Skip notes. "Other faerie folk simply shouldered them out. You won't see the neo otyugh, either; the book contains all the rules you need to start with an otyugh and build it up to that status or beyond." With "only" 500-plus monsters in the new book, it was inevitable that most players would find at least one favorite had missed the boat. This proved just as true for the man who made the final choices as to what was in and what wasn't. "I've always had fun with faerie dragons," Skip says, "but they didn't make the cut either. And gone is the ixitxachitl. Not such a great monster, but I've always loved the name."

Rebuilding the Beast

The second time you find yourself building Frankenstein's monster, you're probably a little more careful about the brain. Skip Williams approached the new *Monster Manual* in a similar fashion—don't forget a monster's history, but take the time to make that monster better. "Players who think they know some of the old standbys inside and out are in for some surprises," he promises.

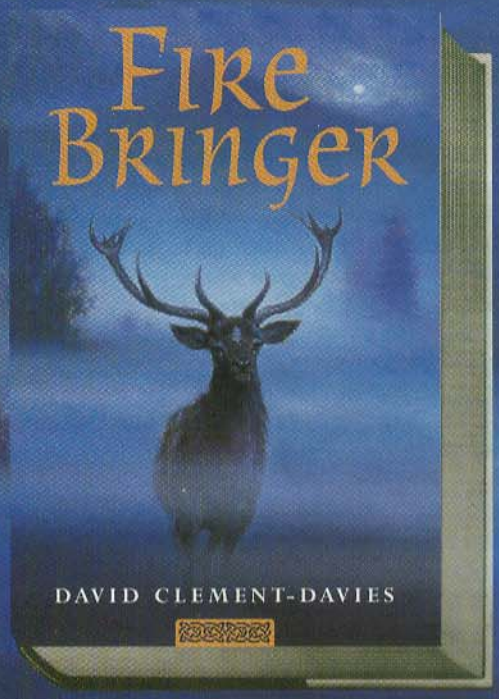
Every creature in the new book has been transformed, he points out, but from most players' perspective, many of the changes will be transparent, if not quite invisible. "Orcs are still warrior-types who'll try to beat you up," he offers. "Trolls still regenerate, vampires still suck your blood. But on the other hand, monsters now have types, which are a lot like character classes, and these give different monsters different strengths and weaknesses."

Furthermore, monsters now have ability scores, and this, Skip emphasizes, has a tremendous impact on how a monster works in play. "Dump a *fear* spell on a rust monster, and it's likely to fail its saving throw and run away" because of its low Wisdom—and thus, its low Will save—he points out. "But good luck trying the same trick on a dragon or a beholder!"

Remembering the Master

Of course, you don't begin your career by working on a project that's likely to be such a monster success. Skip started out as a part-time clerk in TSR's Dungeon Hobby Shop in 1976, and he's been on his way up ever since. *Dragon* readers will recognize him as the voice

Penguin Putnam has the books Fantasy lovers crave!



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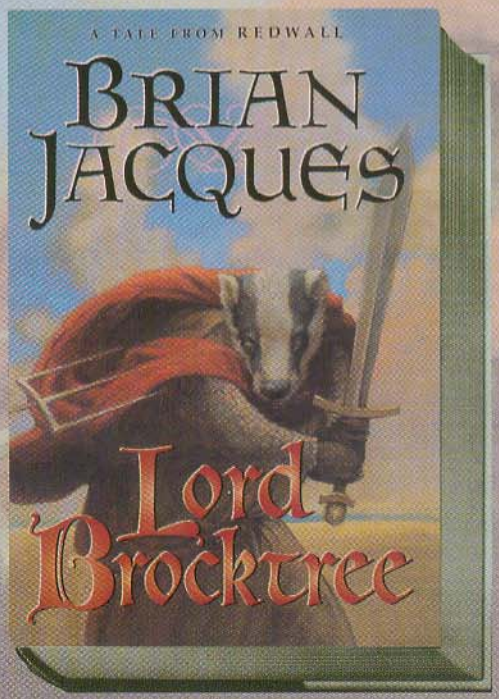

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Lord Brocktree

by

BRIAN JACQUES

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Of course, the inclusion of the Character Generator CD-ROM and *Living Greyhawk Journal* #0 make up for the content not found in the magazine!

Again, great work on the new format, and thanks for the freebies; now show us some D&D 3rd Edition!

Steve Benton • Cocoa Beach, FL

Money grubbing ... Oh! Wait ...

After receiving the latest issue (#274), I have to write you and give a piece of my mind.

I am a loyal D&D 2nd Edition DM and player, and I have been against a new edition ever since you started talking about it last year. But, due to a busy life, I was unable to voice my opinions and possibly persuade someone at Wizards of the Coast to keep their filthy mitts off *my* game and *my* rules!

Fortunately, I didn't do that, because I have just received my 3rd Edition Character Generator Demo CD-ROM, and now I really want to congratulate all of you who put a *lot* of time and effort into this sleek, smooth version. I was vehemently against another rules edition ... but what I'm really ashamed to admit is that I thought Wizards of the Coast was just slapping together another game system and labeling it D&D just to make a heap o' money. Now, as far as I'm concerned, Wizards of the Coast has diligently researched and carefully assembled a set of coherent rules that are sleek and easy to use.

Now, on to the bad side of the letter. (Oh no, here it comes. He doesn't like the new magazine format ...)

How right you are! Obviously, some people, like me, are slow to accept change. I do not like the new *Dragon* masthead! I do not like the computer graphic headers in the magazine itself! I do not like the intentional blurring or scratching of the pictures inside! I do not like the issue number on the spine of the binding. It came scuffed up in the mail, so I can't read it. I think the interior fonts leave a lot to be desired. How about something a little more fantasy-orientated, like Sherwood or Arthurian, not this "dark punk noir." I would really like to see a shift in this trend of shocking people to get their attention to having something strikingly beautiful yet medieval get my attention. The dragon on the cover is great, but the artist's idea of improvements consisting of computer graphics along the side didn't impress me much.

Finally, I liked the "Nottingham Castle" and "Robin Hood Country" map insert very much, but when I opened the plastic wrapper, I almost threw it away thinking it was just an ad insert! I can't even cut the ads off the one side because that would ruin the other side of the map! Do you really need that map insert space for ads? [*Yes, we do. It lets us cheat on our budget so we can include maps and other freebies now and again.—Dave*]

About the funeral notice for King Azoun IV, I don't play much Forgotten Realms but I kept up with some of the Forgotten Realms product line to supplement my Greyhawk campaign. I like the *Living Greyhawk Journal*. I just hope I'm able to participate online.

That's all! Thanks for letting me give you a piece of my mind.

Robert Weber • Sargent, NE

If you'd like an extra Sherwood map to display both sides at once, or to give one copy to your players while you mark up the other, check out issue #82 of Dungeon magazine, which has another copy to go with the "Dark Times in Sherwood" adventure.

Was the question of devils and demons in the new* Monster Manual *the first one on the table when design began?

"Hardly. The demon/devil issue was a toss-off. Somebody said, 'Let's do this!' and the rest of us just said, 'Yes, let's.'"

—**Skip Williams**

of "Sage Advice," a column he's been writing for 12 years now. During his tenure, Skip has directed the Gen Con Game Fair (1980-1983) and did an amazing amount of freelance work. In 1989, he joined the RPGA staff for a few years before becoming a roleplaying game designer at TSR. (Players no doubt remember Skip's most-recent module, *Axe of the Dwarvish Lords*, from 1999.) With the acquisition of TSR by Wizards of the Coast, Skip moved up to Senior Designer and, most recently, to his work on the new editions of the three core D&D books.

When asked which changes to the D&D game players will find most exciting, Skip can narrow it down to two rules: "It's a toss-up between dual- and multiclassing rules that really work—and that anyone can use," he says, "and the abolition of class/race restrictions. Now, if you can think of a character concept, you can make it work."

Naturally, his intense work on the three core books is far from his last contribution to the system's update.

"I'm currently working on the new edition of the Forgotten Realms campaign setting," he says, "which involves looking at all the goodies the new rules have to offer and merging them into the already rich tapestry of the Realms. It's proving to be a surprisingly good fit."

While working nearly 90 hours a week right now, Skip doesn't get much time to do any gaming of his own; his focus is entirely on creating the tools that will lead to great gaming experiences for D&D's core consumers. The *Monster Manual* should serve that purpose well, given its variety of old favorites and new surprises.

As for those brand-new creatures, Skip seems to have a favorite. "I think the delver is a real hoot," he volunteers. "It looks weird—sort of like a cross between a sea turtle and a giant slug—and it's really tough. It has one nasty physical attack and a big bag of tricks as well, but you can reason with it. The hack-and-slash crowd will find delvers a real challenge, but so will the roleplayers."

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PlayStation

The Good, the Bad, and the English

Now that I've thoroughly consumed *Dragon* #274, I thought I'd let you know my thoughts on *Dragon's* new format.

The Good: "Scale Mail" was a fun read. There's that touch of humor that Dave was showing in his responses a while back. Nice to see it return.

"Up On a Soapbox" was Gary's best article yet since his return. I look forward to the next one.

The cartoons are great! I love "Nodwick," "Shop Keep," and "DragonMirth." It's a shame KotD is gone.

"One Roll To Rule Them All" was excellent! Since I've first come to understand the new d20 system, I've thought it was great. But now that I understand why it is how it is, it's just that much better! "Class Acts" and "The Mystic" were both good articles; they made me want to make some prestige classes of own, the only drawback being that I can't until the *Dungeon Master's Guide* shows up in September.

"The D&D Movie" article was interesting. The closer it comes, the more I want to see this movie.

The Robin Hood articles and poster were fantastic! My hat is off to Mr. Malcomson [sic]. While I likely won't use the information as a whole, I can glean many parts of it for my own campaign, which is very "forest-based."

As a DM, I found "Indispensable" amusing, but at the same time I wanted all my players to read its good advice.

"Power and Glory" was great, as expected. I always look forward to the fiction when either Ben Bova or Greg Keyes is writing. Don't let them stop writing for you. Chain them up in the basement, if you must.

I found myself more drawn to "The Bestiary" than usual, likely because of the new D&D stats. Great monsters!

"The Adventures of Volo" also seemed better than usual this issue. The Rite of the Stag Lass is an odd, yet interesting, ritual. I also like that Elminster's comments were kept to a minimum and were out of the way.

"Dungeoncraft" was excellent, as usual. I was a bit disappointed that Ray didn't mention mixing the two "voice styles," which I find works really well.

"Power Play" is a great concept, but...

The Bad: I can't say I'm a fan of how the articles are mixed together in certain areas of the magazine. I did not find the "Scale Mail"/"Up on a Soapbox"/"Profiles" configuration very appealing. Having "Power Plays" interspersed throughout the latter quarter of the magazine was distracting from the articles it invaded. My suggestion is to give each article its own page(s), as before.

"Plotbending" and "The Hero with 1d1000 Faces" weren't bad, per se; I just didn't find them useful. They both seemed "common sense-ish" to me (except for the added randomness of the latter, which I didn't like), but I suppose they would be useful to beginning DMs.

Finally, what's all the stuff from the end of the magazine doing at the beginning? Please return "Convention Calendar," "DragonMirth," and "Coming Soon" to the end.

The Ugly: From what I've read on the Web, I think you've already heard much about the "splotchy backgrounds." My opinion is that they are fine, unless they are distracting. Unfortunately, a lot of the backgrounds in the magazine were a bit distracting. Light and subtle are preferable to dark and extreme. The art, however, was very good.

Overall, I found the issue to be an excellent read, and I'm really looking forward to upcoming issues.

Keith Sletten • Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada

Thanks for all the great feedback. As you can see, much of it has been addressed in the past issue and this one. Let us know what you think of the refinements.

Speaking of Ian Malcomson, he'd like it to be perfectly clear that he's English, not Scottish, as our misspelling of his name on those bylines implied. The English normally don't intimidate us, since they're mostly halflings and gnomes, but just in case Ian's a football hooligan, we'd like to make it perfectly clear that we're most sincerely and ineffably sorry about this egregious error, and we implore him to forgive us before Dave meets him at Gen Con UK in September.

As for fiction, we'd never dare chain Ben Bova, but we've been out drinking with Greg many times, and sometimes we brought a camera. Expect a lot of great fiction (and other wonderful surprises) from Greg in 2001.

Thanks to everyone who wrote all the quality feedback on issue #274. If you keep it coming, we promise to keep using it.
—Dave

Nodwick
by Aaron Williams
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OH, THANK HEAVENS YOU'VE ARRIVED!
NO TRICKS, FIEND! WE-- HUH?
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...AND OVER AND OVER, "PUT THE SEAT DOWN!"
SEAT? ON THE TOILET?
NO! ON THE VOLCANO!
UH, I MAY BE WRONG, BUT I DON'T THINK VOLCANOES HAVE SEATS.
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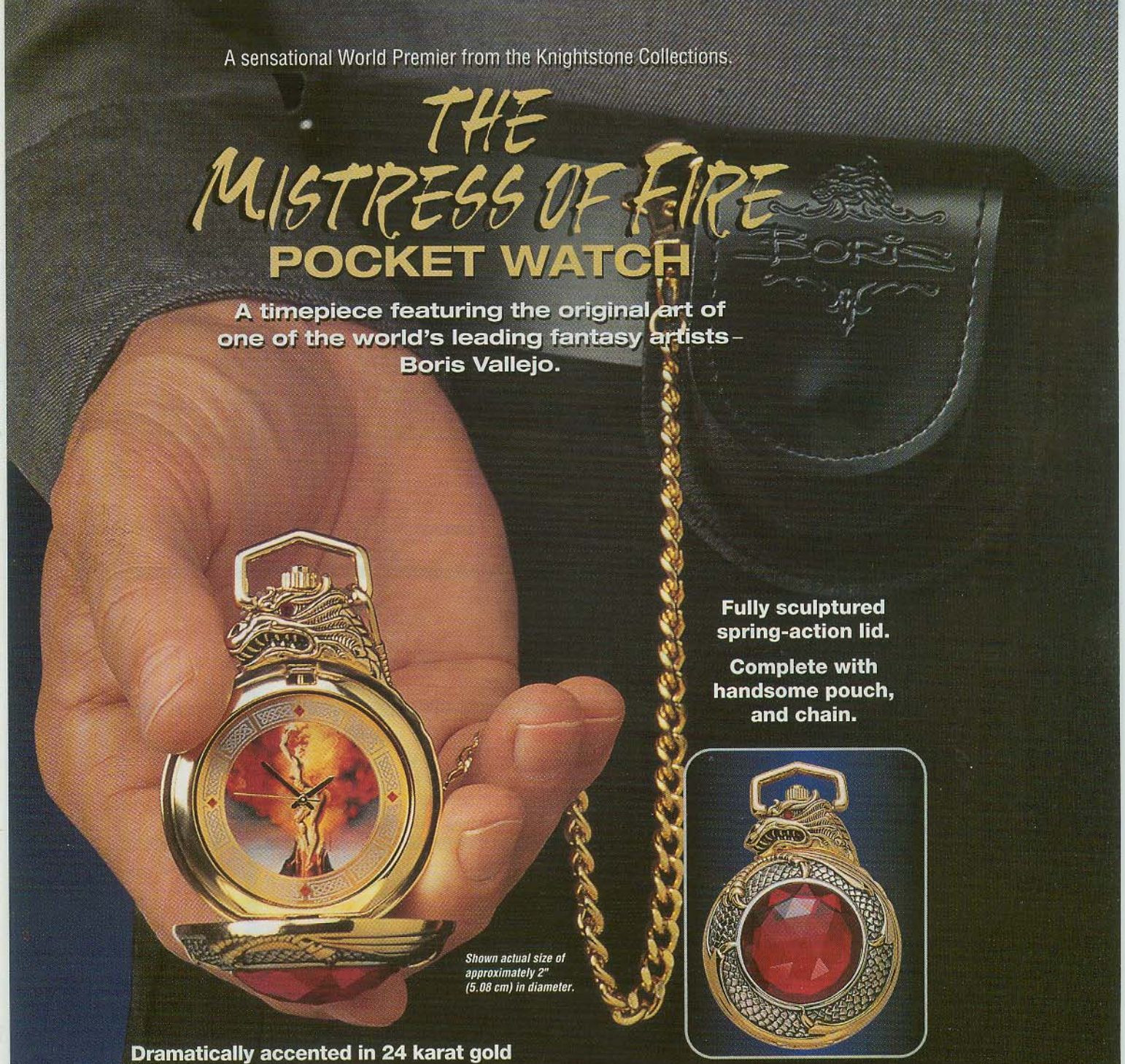

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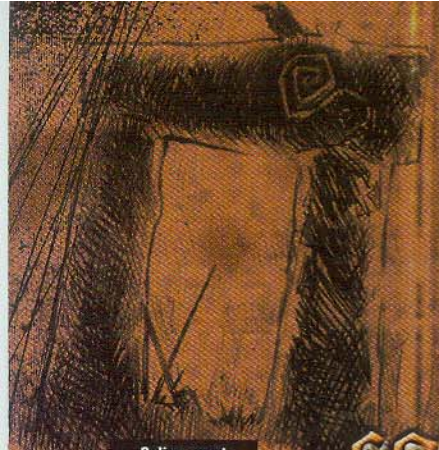

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october convention calendar

Online event
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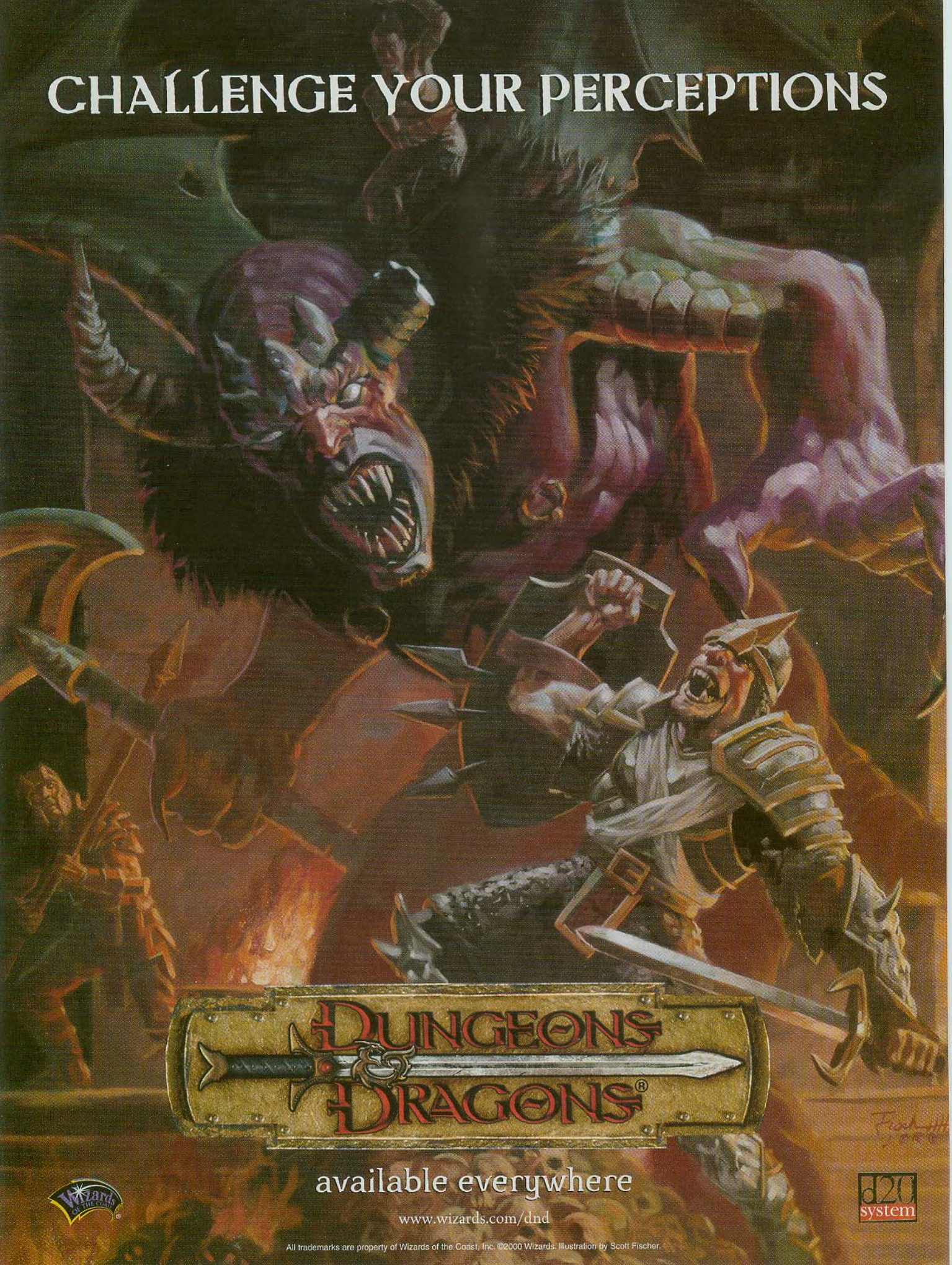
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
SHORECON 2000 • CHERRY HILL TRINOC-CON 2000 • DURHAM one	RPGA Forum two	Magic Online Help RPGA Tonight three	Living City Time four	Game Help five	MANAFEST • SAN MATEO six	seven
MANAFEST • SAN MATEO eight	RPGA Forum nine	Magic Online Help Mystery Guest! ten	RPGA Writer's Workshop Living City Time eleven	Game Help twelve	Designers' Guild thirteen	fourteen
fifteen	RPGA Forum sixteen	Magic Online Help Industry Edge seventeen	Living City Time eighteen	Game Help nineteen	KNIGHT GAMES • BROOKLYN RPG Hour twenty	twenty-one
KNIGHT GAMES • BROOKLYN twenty-two	RPGA Forum twenty-three	Magic Online Help Sage Advice Live! twenty-four	RPGA Writer's Workshop Living City Time twenty-five	Game Help twenty-six	TCG Hour twenty-seven	JVL-COM • JANESVILLE twenty-eight
JVL-COM • JANESVILLE twenty-nine	RPGA Forum thirty	Magic Online Help Halloween Special! thirty-one				

CONVENTION CALENDAR POLICIES This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines must be observed. To ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct. The information given in the listing must include the following, in this order: 1. Convention title and dates held. 2. Site and location. 3. Address(es) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained. Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. **Warning:** We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Accurate information is your responsibility. Copy deadlines are the first Monday of each month, four months prior to the on-sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the first Monday of September. Announcements for all conventions must be mailed to: "Conventions," *Dragon* Magazine, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA, 98055, U.S.A. If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at (425) 204-8286 (U.S.A.). **Important:** *Dragon* Magazine does not publish phone numbers for conventions. Be certain that any address you send us is complete and correct. To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that it was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please do not send convention notices by fax, as this method has not proven reliable.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RPG Hour

Realmswatch: Why a New Realms?
We look at the reasons behind the decision to create a "new" FORGOTTEN REALMS, beyond updating it for the newest edition of D&D. Jim Butler, brand manager, gives the overall perspective, while designer Sean Reynolds takes on the details about creating a new look for this classic campaign. October 20, 5 P.M. PST

Industry Edge

Pokémon Gym Challenge
With *Gym Heroes* we got to see what decks by Brock, Misty, Erika, and Lt. Serge would look like. *Gym Challenge* takes us to the flip side with 132 more cards that concentrate on what tricks Blaine, Sabrina, Koga, and Giovanni have up their sleeves! Come ready to talk about the larger themes and ideas behind the Pokémon phenomenon. (Save your game play questions for Master Trainers on Thursdays!) October 17, 5 P.M. PST

Designers' Guild

D&D Monster Manual
Old enemies and new threats. The *Monster Manual* has over 500 baddies just waiting to populate your campaigns. For those of you who were little monsters growing up, relive your childhood—the creatures all have DUNGEONS & DRAGONS character stats so you can play them as well. Designer Skip Williams presides. October 13, 5 P.M. PST

Mystery Guest!

Guess Our Guest and Win!
Every month we invite unnamed guests to speak and we give clues to their identity through their description. Email your guess; winners are chosen randomly from the entries and will receive Wizards products and have their name announced at the end of the chat! Go to *www.wizards.com/mysteryguest* for details. October 10, 5 P.M. PST

TCG Hour

L5R: The Unicorn and Spirit War
An epidemic sweeps across Rogukan and the Emperor falls ill. The Shadowlands armies swell with newly dead plague victims. Thus, the Clan War begins. Author of *The Unicorn*, Allison Lassieur, talks about her contribution to the Scrolls series. Brand managers Steven Horvath and Ed Bolme are on hand to talk about the upcoming *Spirit War* set release. October 27, 5 P.M. PST

Sage Advice Live!

Ask Your D&D Questions!
No doubt the release of 3rd Edition D&D has you looking over your adventures and evaluating how your play is affected. If you have questions, The Sage has answers. Skip will be giving special attention to conversion issues during this Sage Advice Live! October 24, 5:00 P.M. PST

RPGA Tonight

Meet David Wise
The Worldwide RPGA Manger, David Wise, will host an hour about ... himself. Find out what he is like and the global strategies for RPGA in the years to come. October 3, 5:00 P.M. PST

Halloween Special

DARK•MATTER: Xenoforms and The Final Church
For Halloween, we've got—what else?—more monsters. From DARK•MATTER's dystopia comes *Xenoforms*, a near-future bestiary of horrific creatures. And *The Final Church* isn't likely a sanctuary you'd want to take refuge in from these creatures. Designer JD Wiker shares his dark visions with us on spook night. October 31, 5 P.M. PST

RPGA Writer's Workshop

Robert Wiese hosts a writer's workshop in the RPGA Events room (accessed through the RPGA Forum) for veteran and budding roleplaying scenario writers. This session is designed to help people become better adventure designers and will delve into topics involved in writing adventure scenarios; this is not a Q&A session. Designed for Guild-level RPGA members, others are welcome to listen, but we will discuss only Guild-level members' scenarios, and only Guild-level members will receive scenarios to read before the sessions. October 11 and 25, 6:00 P.M. PST

RPGA Forum

HQ Time at RPGA
Every Monday, you'll find RPGA Headquarters staff in the RPGA Forum. Staff will answer questions and shoot the breeze with you (but not engage in in-character chat), so come on by! October 2, 9, 16, 23, and 30, 6:00 P.M. PST

Living City Time

Every Wednesday, you'll find a LIVING CITY board member in the RPGA Forum ready to answer your questions about our most popular Living campaign. This is your chance to verify rumors, ask questions, and give your suggestions to the campaign board. October 4, 11, 18, and 25, 6:00 P.M. PST

Magic Online Help

Whether you're a beginner trying to make the jump from Starter Magic to the Advanced and Expert sets, or a veteran player with lingering doubts about the Classic Edition rules changes, Adam has the answers to get your Magic games running smoothly. Available every Tuesday in the TCG Forum of our chat rooms. October 3, 10, 17, 24, and 31, 4:00 P.M. PST

Game Help

Pokémon Online Help
Pokémon Puzzled? Master Trainer of the Pokémon Team answers your rules questions about the English Pokémon Trading Card Game every Thursday in the TCG Forum. Stop by with your question in hand! October 5, 12, 19, and 26, 3-5 P.M. PST

oct. nov. cons cons

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Cherry Hill Hilton, Cherry Hill.
Contact: Complete Strategy Gaming
P.O. Box 1984
Brick, NJ 08723.
Email: shorecon2000@gameconvention.com
Website: www.gameconvention.com

TRINOC-CON 2000
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CARNAGE ON THE MOUTAIN
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Texas A&M University
Student Organization and Finance Center
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Aggieland Station
College Station, TX 77844-9081.
Website: gaming.tamu.edu/protocon
Email: fewlass@tca.net

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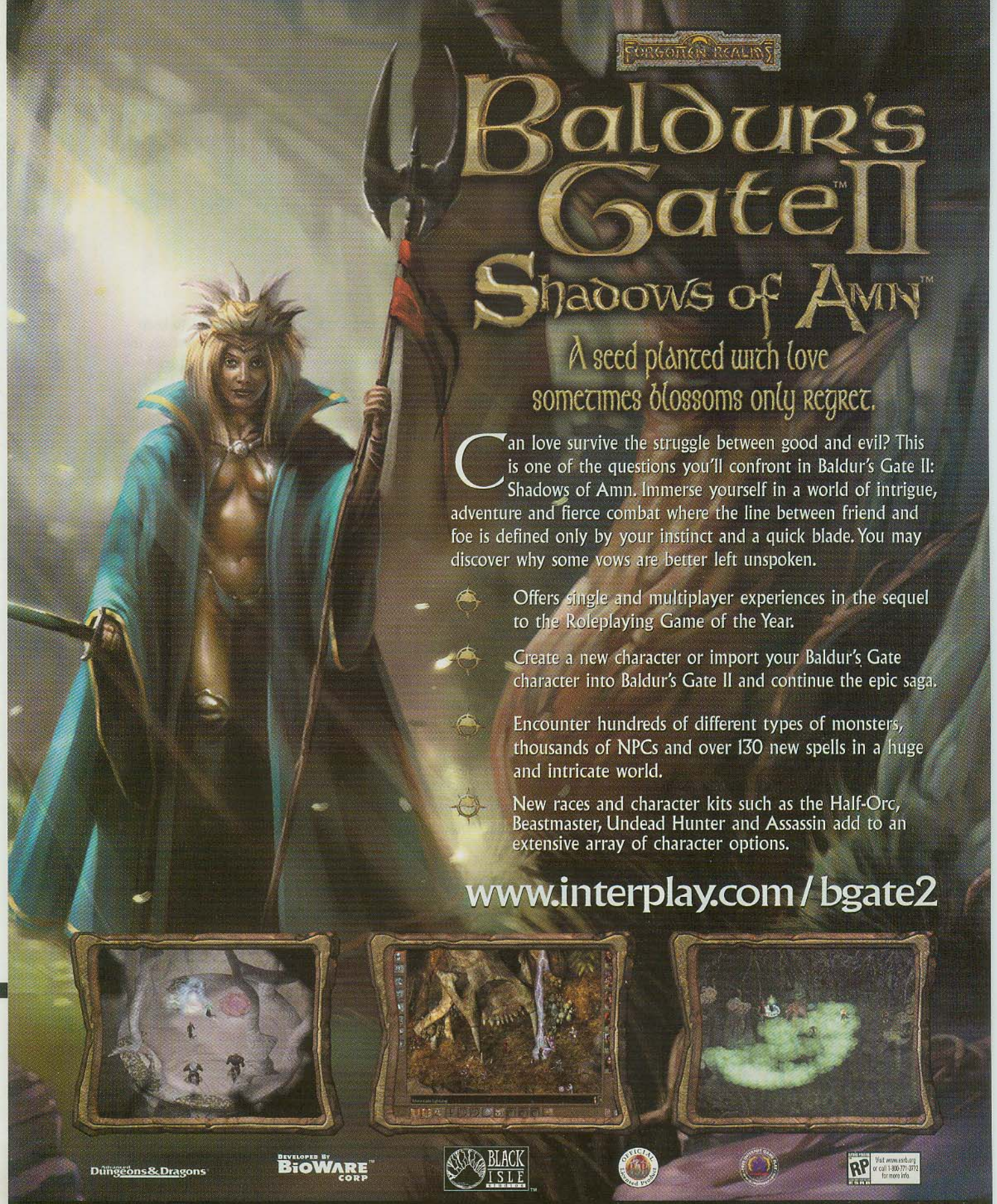
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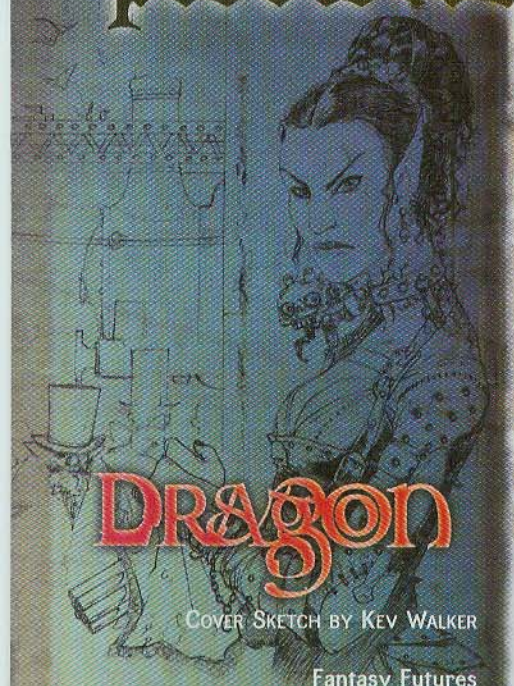

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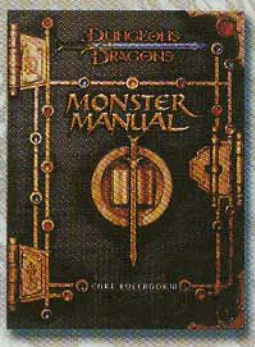
by Skip Williams



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A Forgotten Realms Adventure
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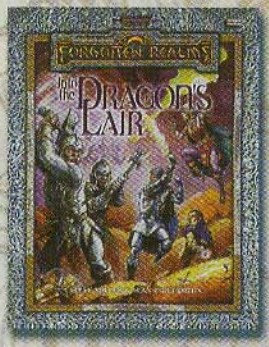

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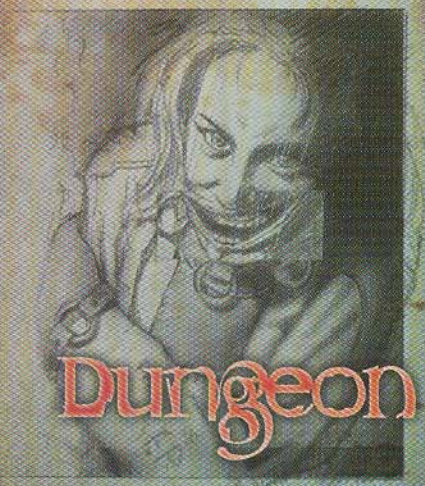

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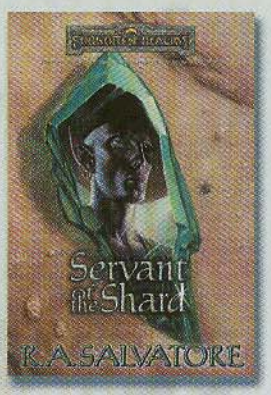

As the Crystal Shard's power over the mercenary Jarlaxle increases, even his dark elf minions become nervous. Only one person, the human assassin Artemis Entreri, is willing to try to save what's left of Jarlaxle's soul, though he'll have to destroy the Crystal Shard to do it!

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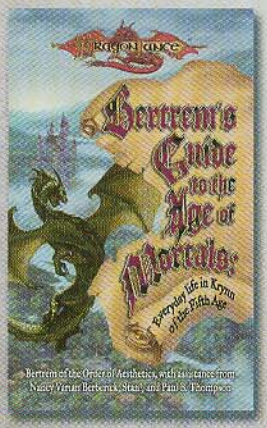

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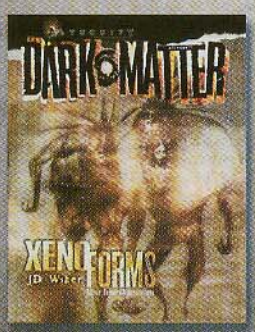
A Dark•Matter Accessory
by JD Wiker



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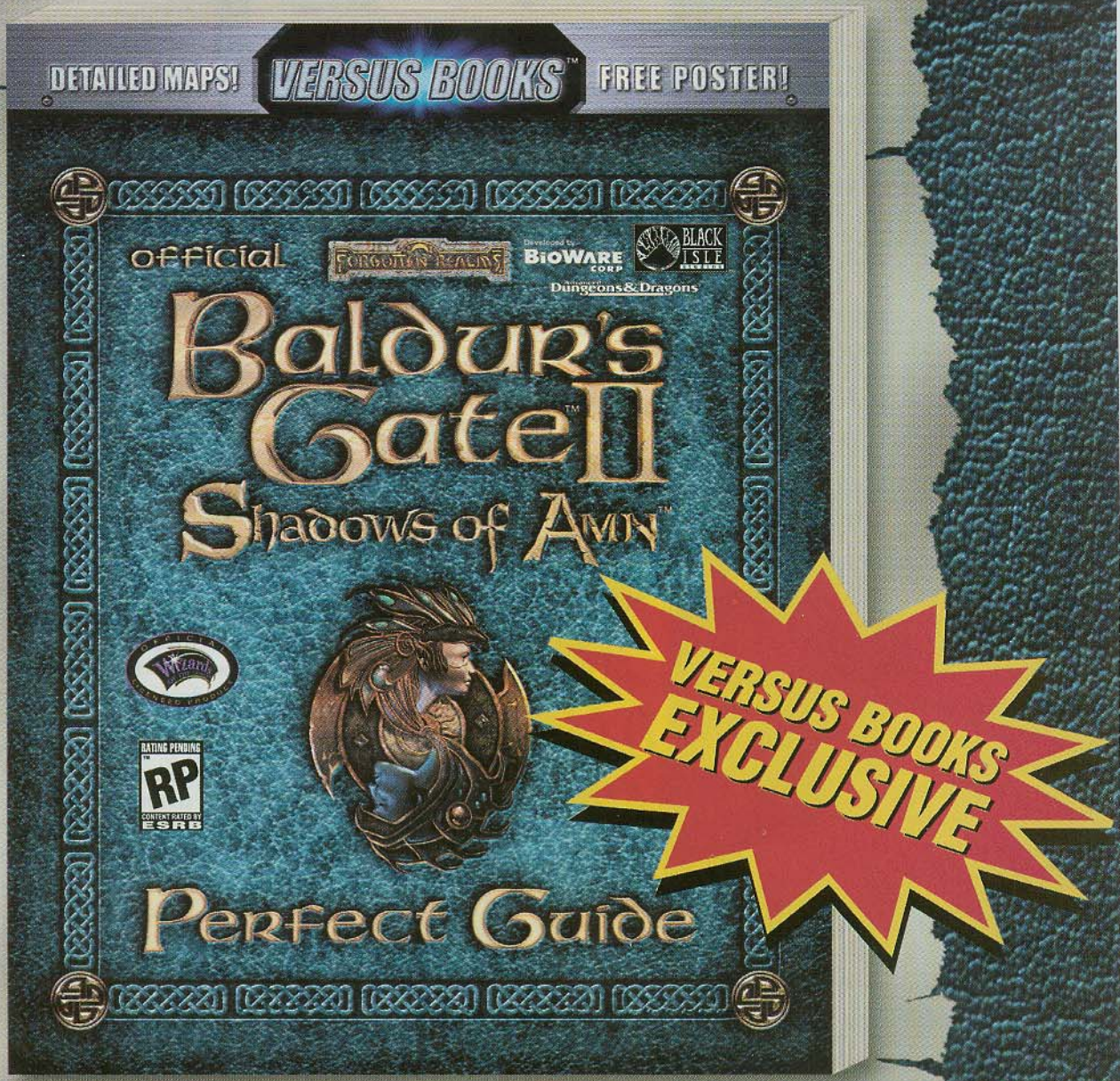

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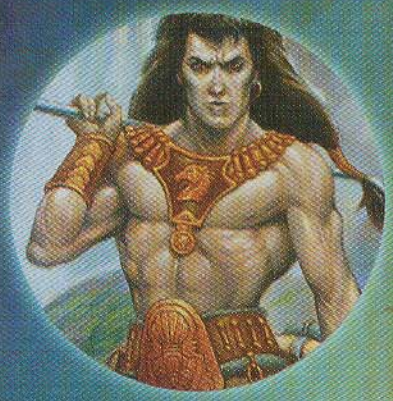

Polyhedron 144
Now being mailed to RPGA members!

October's *Polyhedron* marks a new editorial and design direction for the official magazine of the RPGA Network. With a new global focus and dedication to covering all types of games, *Polyhedron* #144 introduces RPGA members to new features, including game reviews, scenario previews, RPGA Network news, and more.

November

Star Wars: Roleplaying Game	
SW Sourcebook	$34.95
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FR Adventure	$17.95
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D&D Adventure	$9.95
Living Greyhawk Gazetteer	
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DL Novel	$6.99

countdown to the forgotten realms

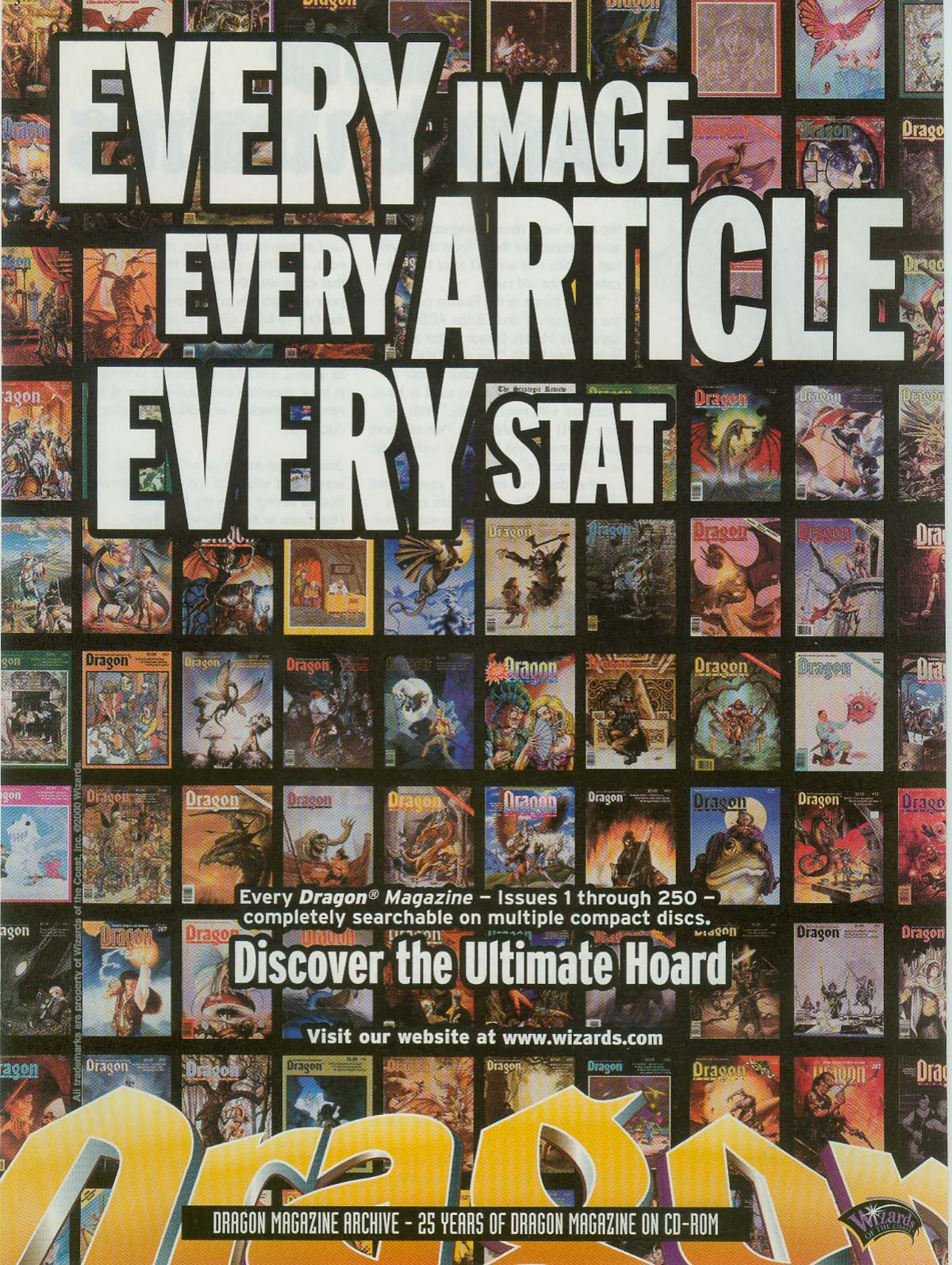
With a new edition of the world's most beloved roleplaying game now on the streets, it only makes sense to follow up with a new edition of that game's most popular campaign setting. Since its release in 1987, Ed Greenwood's Forgotten Realms setting has been home to more D&D campaigns than any other shared world. With a dizzying number of computer games, novels, game supplements, and free-form chat games throughout the Internet, virtually everyone has paid a visit to Faerûn.

Too Much of a Good Thing

With twelve busy years worth of adventures, stories, and campaign expansions—not to mention magazine articles—the Realms is deep and rich, a place where you can find almost any environment you desire. That depth can seem intimidating, especially to new players and those who discovered the setting after it had accumulated enough source material to fill a library. To overcome that obstacle, Anthony Valterra, the Associate Business Manager for Tabletop Roleplaying Games, explains that the new edition provides "a single sourcebook for ongoing players to use and a single entry point for those people who are new to the Realms."

Fzoul
by Todd Lockwood

continued on page 30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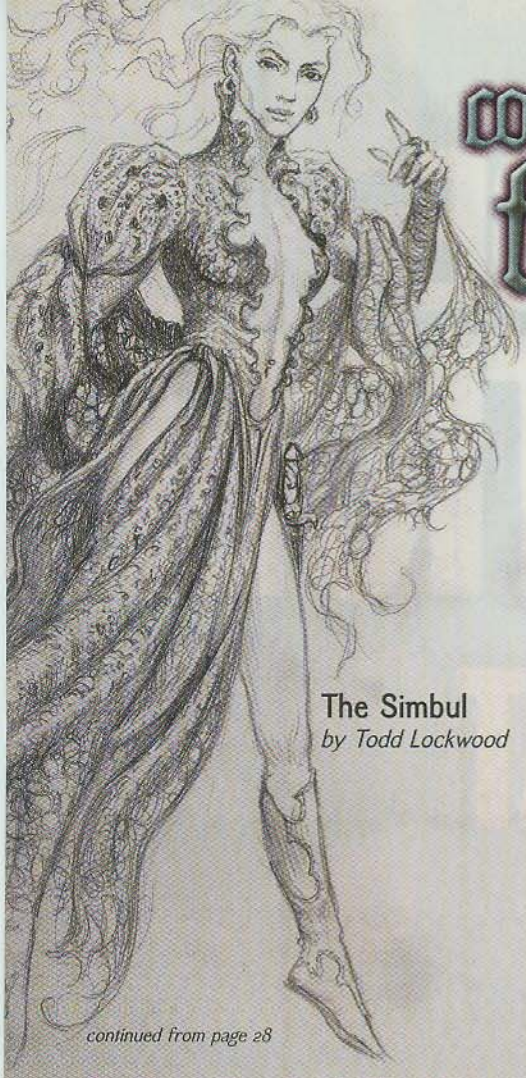
countdown to the forgotten realms



The Simbul
by Todd Lockwood

continued from page 28

The Times, They Are A-Changing

Unlike "static" settings, which don't change from one year to the next, the Realms is constantly transforming. Among other developments, Game Designer Sean K Reynolds reports, "Drow are appearing in large numbers in the forests of the Realms. Mulhorand has invaded Unther. The Red Wizards have abandoned martial conquest and become manufacturers of magic items. All of these things deserve to be explained in one sourcebook, so people new to the Realms aren't lost in all the history."

While the new book pays special attention to the most popular regions of Faerûn, the North and the Heartlands, Sean assures Realms fans that there's more to the new edition. "This is the most comprehensive look at the people and lands of Faerûn that we have ever done." If you want to be a Red Wizard of Thay, there are rules for it. If you want to be one of the Witches of Rashemon, you got it.

New Rules

Sometimes, the Forgotten Realms has introduced magical elements for which the rules were never designed. Its characters, especially those from the novels, had abilities that weren't easy to duplicate with the old rules.

"Many things in the Realms pushed the envelope of 2nd Edition AD&D," says Julia Martin, Senior Editor in Roleplaying R&D. "The new D&D game makes it easy to accomplish almost all the things that 2nd Edition used to have problems with mechanically." With the new D&D rules, she says, "We can both balance things and 'go for it' with magic and characters."

What does that mean for your Realms characters? "The new version spends much more space on how to make your characters Realms characters," says Julia. New prestige classes and regional feats (detailed in an upcoming issue) let you customize your character based on geographical origin and even subrace.

Facelift

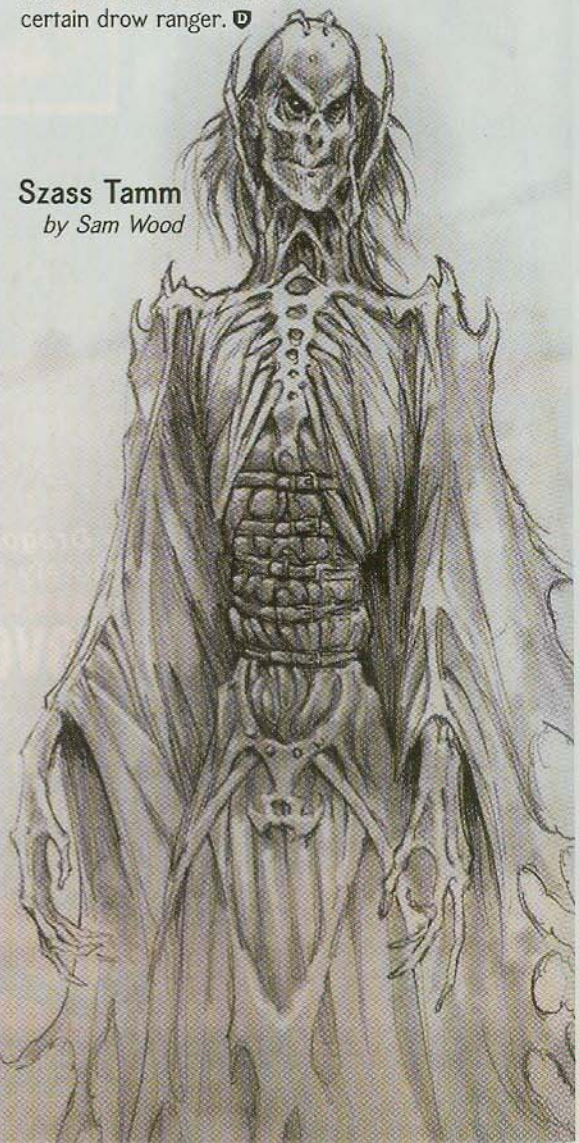
The look of D&D changed dramatically this year, and the Realms will get its makeover too. However, it won't be quite as drastic. "With the Realms characters," says Artist Todd Lockwood, "we wanted to find a more classic look. [It'll be] less grungy and hard-edged than the core D&D concept work, because these are all well established, high-level characters." That means you can expect a new look for Elminster, but the Mohawk is right out.

Synchronize Your Watches

If, like most gamers, you start a new campaign every 18 months or so, here's a golden opportunity to start fresh. Even if you've been playing in the Realms for years and plan to stay there, it's a great time to reinvigorate your campaign. "The new edition of the Realms gives us the opportunity to update all of Faerûn to one year," says Julia. This way, those who've played the Realms for only ten days will have the same understanding of the campaign as those who've known it for ten years.

Over the next five months, we'll take a look at the elements that make the Realms special, including its most famous (and infamous) characters, its organizations, countries, gods, and the new rules that come with the new setting. Keep your eyes on this article, and you'll be the first to know what's changing and why. You'll be privy to the insights of the designers, editors, and artists, and, as always, you'll have a chance to send in your questions and feedback for all to read and attack ... er, address in polite discourse.

Join us next month as we revisit the heroes and villains of the new Forgotten Realms setting, from the scheming Manshoon to the indomitable Steel Regent of Cormyr ... and maybe we'll call on an old wizard and a certain drow ranger. D



Szass Tamm
by Sam Wood

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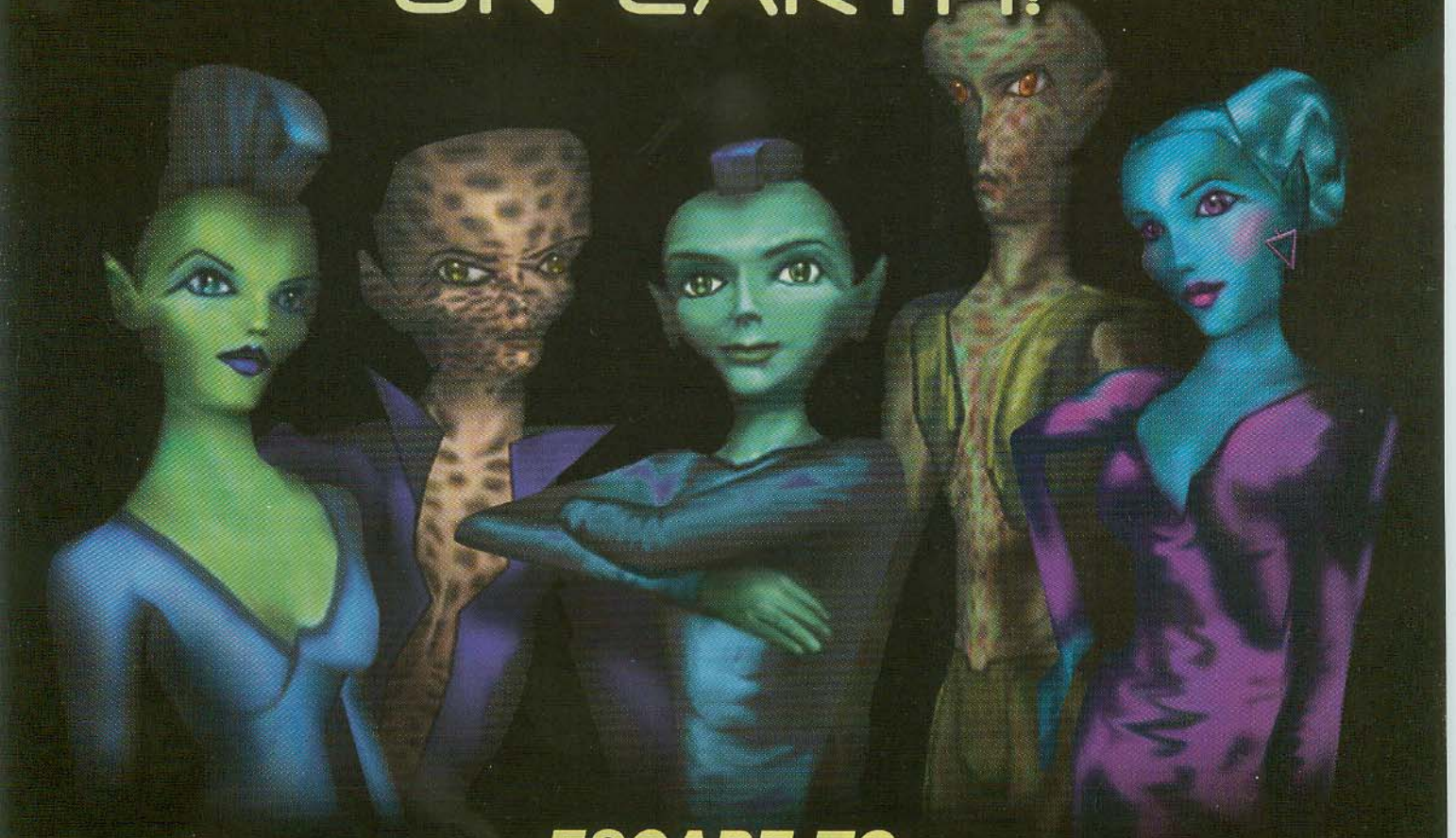

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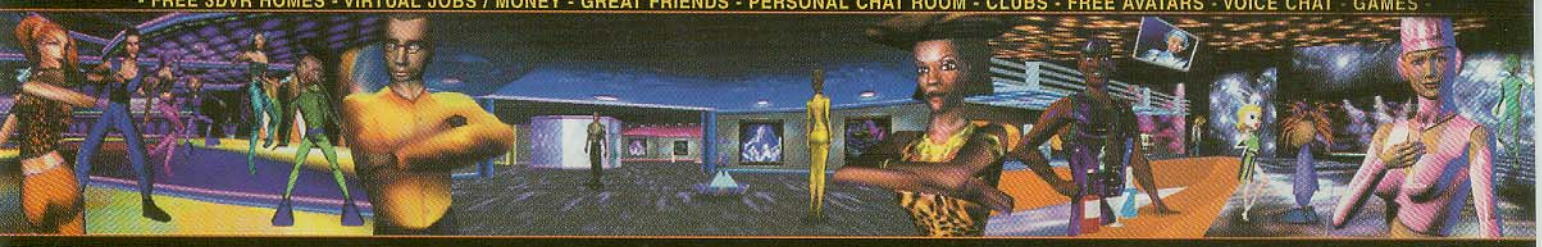

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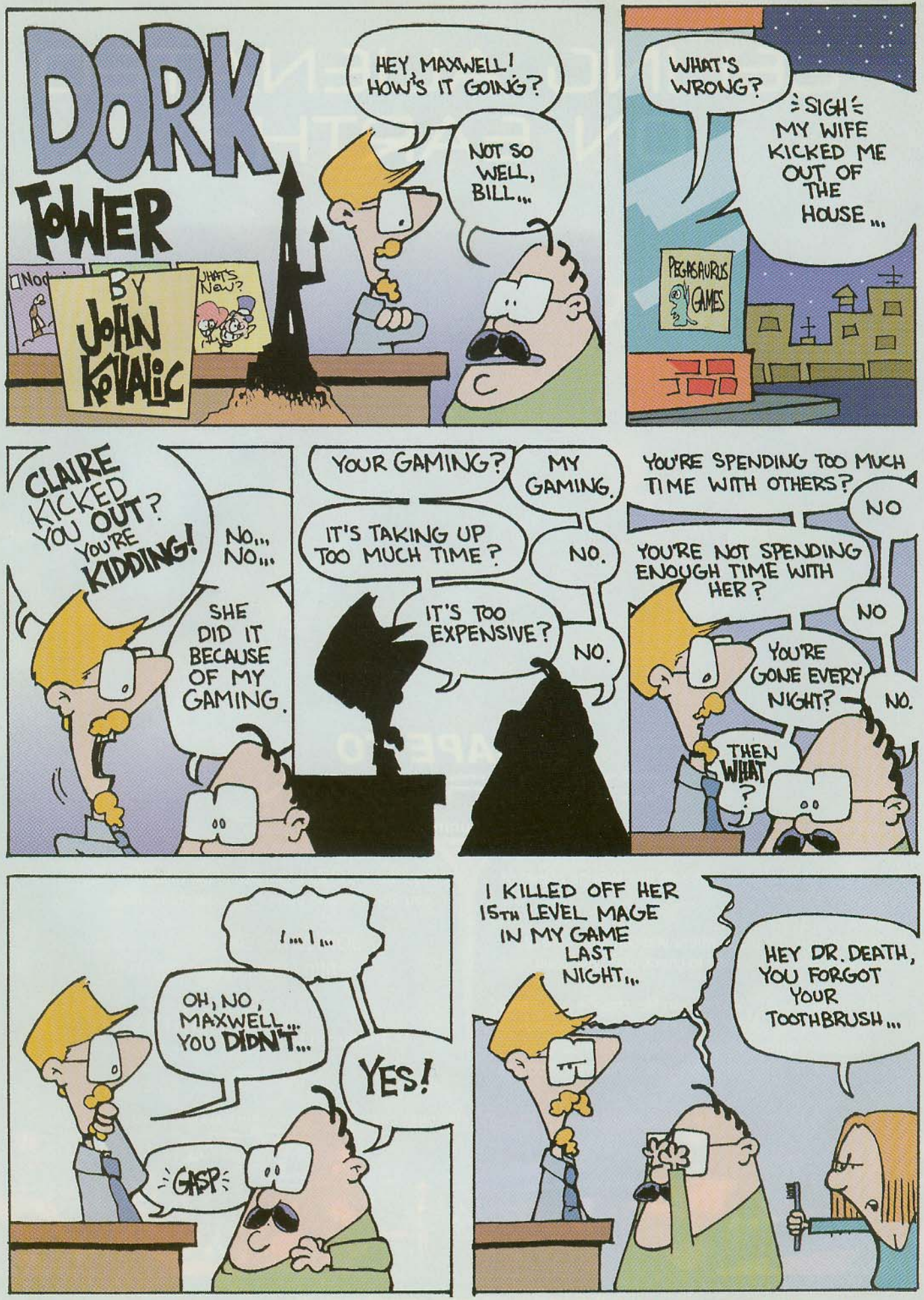

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DEAD and Breakfast

A Spooky Game for 3–6 Players

by James Ernest • illustrated by John Kovalic

Players: 3-6
Playing Time: 1 Hour
You Need: The **Dead and Breakfast** board; eight 6-sided dice, including six dice of different colors for the guests of the Bed and Breakfast, plus two white dice for rolling; a score pad and pencil; about 30 poker chips in a unique color for each player; and a standard deck of playing cards without jokers.

The Guests

The six colored 6-sided dice represent guests of the inn. As the guests walk around the board, the number showing on each represents his level of agitation. Each guest starts as a "2," (mildly spooked) but can grow as high as a "6" (completely freaked) before he wigs out and gets calmer again.

The Ghosts

Each poker chip represents a ghost that can "haunt" a room on the board. Different ghosts belong to different players, which is why each player needs her own color of chips. By the end of the game, every numbered room will contain at least one ghost, and many rooms will contain several ghosts.

Beginning the Game

Put one guest (from the colored dice) on each of the six doors. Each guest starts as a "2." Shuffle the deck and deal a hand of four cards to each player. Put the remainder of the deck in the middle of the board, with space for a discard pile beside it, and determine randomly who goes first.

On each turn, you will perform three actions, in the following order:

1. **Draw.** Draw your hand up to five cards if there are cards left in the deck.

2. **Play.** Play one card from your hand, and haunt the corresponding room. Haunting the room means that you put one of your chips on that room.

If there are haunted rooms to either side of the room you just played, you will haunt those rooms as well. Place chips on top of the other chips in each haunted room in both directions until you reach a room with no chips.

Exception: You do not add a chip to a room where you are already the top ghost. However, you do continue haunting rooms beyond your own chip if they are still part of the same string.

Playing your card is mandatory, and taking over adjacent rooms is automatic. You cannot choose not to haunt an entire string of connected rooms, even in the rare instance when it would be bad for you.

3. **Move one Guest.** First declare which guest you want to move, then roll 2d6 and advance the guest by that amount clockwise around the board. Knowing that you're most likely to roll 6, 7, or 8, you obviously want to choose a guest that's likely to do you some good, either by landing on a space you already haunt, or by landing on a space you hold in your hand. (See Surprise, below.)

If the guest lands on any numbered room, whether it's haunted or not, that guest is "scared," and his rank increases by one point. Exception: If the guest is a 6, he "freaks out" instead, as described later. Freaked-out guests are worth negative points.

Scoring

When a guest lands in a haunted room, the players who haunt that room will score a number of points equal to the guest's original rank. For example, if a 4 lands in the room, the ghosts in that room share 4 points and the guest becomes a 5.

The points are divided as follows: The first two points go to the top ghost, then one point goes to each chip down the stack. If there are any points left at the bottom, return to the top and continue distributing points one at a time. For example, if a 5-ranked guest lands on a haunted room, the ghosts in that room share the points as follows:

One Ghost: All five points go to that player.

Two Ghosts: Two points go to the top player, then 1 to the bottom player, 1 more to the top, and 1 more to the bottom, for a total of 3 points for the top player and 2 points for the bottom player.

Three Ghosts: Two points to the top, 1 to each chip under it, 1 more to the top, for a total of 3 to the top, 1 to the middle, and 1 to the bottom.

Four Ghosts: Two points to the top, one point to each chip beneath it.

Five or More Ghosts: The fifth ghost and higher get no points in this situation.

More than one chip in the same stack might be owned by the same player, meaning that she will get points from both ghosts.

Freaking Out

Guests showing a 6 are dangerous. If a 6-ranked guest lands in a numbered room, whether it's haunted or not, that guest re-rolls and becomes a random rank from 1 to 6. The ghosts haunting that room lose points equal to the guest's new rank, distributed in the same manner as positive points. So, for example, if the guest freaks out and becomes a three, then 3 negative points are distributed. If he rolls a six, there are 6 negative points to go around, and the guest is still dangerous because he can freak out again!

The Surprise

If a guest stops on a room that is not yet haunted, the player who holds the card for that room can play it right away as a "Surprise" and score the points for scaring that guest. Surprise is always an option, whether it's your turn or not, and you might even Surprise a 6 if you're willing to lose a random number of points to capture a particular room. However, when you play a Surprise, you do not haunt the neighboring rooms as you would with a normal play. (You still place one of your chips on that room.)

Ending the Turn

After the guest moves and the points are scored, the turn passes to the left.

Ending the Game

The game continues until every card is played. This means that several turns will pass with no one drawing cards, and some players might have a turn or two in which they cannot play cards because their hands are empty. After the last card is played, finish that turn, and the player with the highest score wins.

Breaking Ties

Dead and Breakfast can be a close game, with scores in a five-player game averaging at about 15 points. If the score is tied at the end of the game, then the tied player whose ghost is on top in the highest ranked room wins, with spades being the highest suit, and kings the highest cards. If none of the tied players is top ghost in any room, then the tie is won by the player who can belt out the longest uninterrupted howl.

Power Surprises: If you want even more variability in the scoring, try this one: You take over neighboring rooms when you surprise, as well as when you make a normal play.

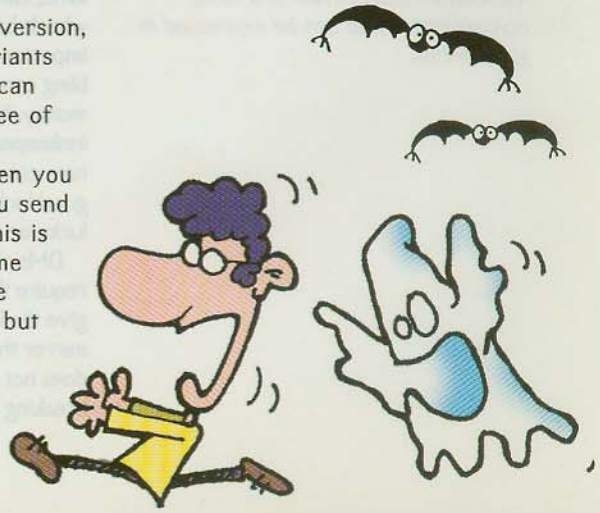
Bigger Guests: Use 8-, 10-, or even 12-sided dice as the guests. They are still freaked out on a 6 or above, so the bigger the die, the more dangerous he can be. For example, if a 10-sided die is a 6 or higher, that guest can deliver up to 10 points of damage and has a 50% chance of staying freaked out. You can use guests of all one size, or a random mixture of different sizes. If you use a 4-sided die, the guest freaks out at 4.

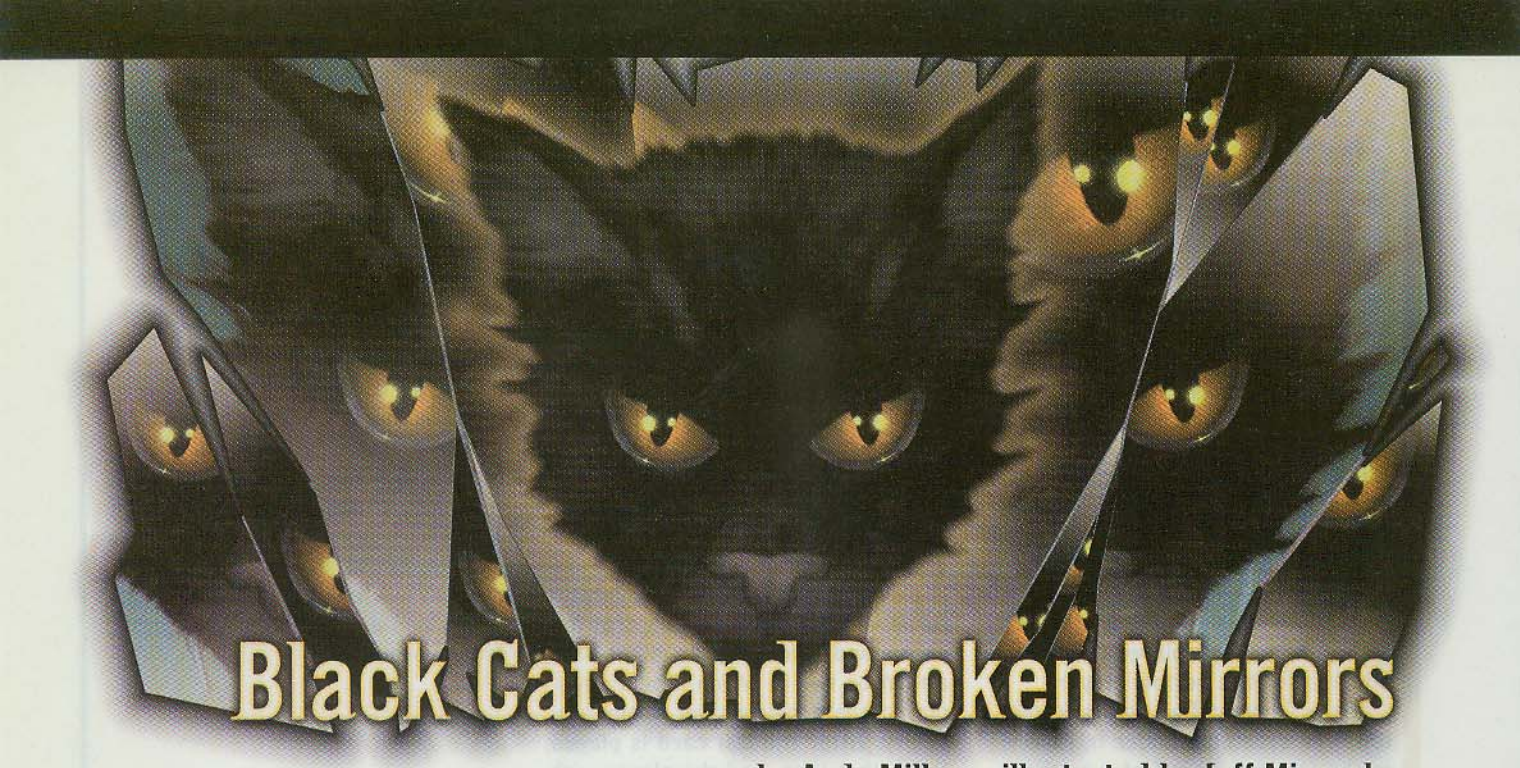
YOUR GOAL: TO SCARE THE BEJEEZUS OUT OF TOURISTS IN A HAUNTED BED AND BREAKFAST

Variations

We like the game best in this version, but here are a few of the variants we have tried and liked. You can play with one, two, or all three of these changes as you prefer.

One Room, One Ghost. When you take over haunted rooms, you send the previous ghosts home. This is the biggest change to the game above, and it was actually the original version of the rules, but we found that it led to more disparate scores and a less interesting endgame.





Black Cats and Broken Mirrors

by Andy Miller • illustrated by Jeff Miracola

Most superstitions originated millennia ago, based on suppositions about how the world worked. These beliefs explained why things happened and created a sense of order to the universe. With the advancement of science, popular beliefs and old religions were thrown aside. Science taught that these superstitions could hold no power over men, that they should be ignored, ridiculed, and forgotten.

Yet they weren't.

People still clung to the old beliefs, remembering that these things once held authority. Even today, some believe they have power.

What if they did?

In fantasy worlds, these beliefs are not baseless; they can have an actual effect on the lives of those who live there. Quaint folk tales and superstitions are founded on magical fact and have consequences that can be expressed in game terms.

It's bad luck to be superstitious.
—Andrew W. Mathis

Presented here are thirteen commonly held superstitions that might affect your D&D game. Each should be modified by the DM to best reflect the campaign world and its beliefs. Instead of assigning specific good or bad luck to each superstition, a separate table of random luck possibilities is provided. As DM, choose what intensity of luck goes with each superstition, and feel free to change the luck modifiers as you see fit (increasing them to +2 or +3, if necessary). Change the outcome often—luck is unpredictable, and not all superstitions are true.

Likewise, if you use the generic good or bad luck entry (on the luck tables, #7 and #13 respectively), you have to adjudicate what happens to the PCs. Animals going lame, valuables lost, clothing torn, wagon wheels breaking, waking up late for an important appointment, and losing at gambling can be used for bad luck. Finding money, happening to look like the innkeeper's long lost son, or other fortunate coincidences could all be used for good luck. Figure out what will be seen as lucky or unlucky to the PCs and use it.

DMs should also note that certain spells require the use of components that could give the PCs bad luck. If a PC handles a mirror that has already been broken, he does not suffer from ill luck. Actually breaking the mirror is a different story.

And I had done an hellish thing
And it would work 'em woe:
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
—Samuel Taylor Coleridge
Rime of the Ancient Mariner

Albatross

An albatross flying around a ship in mid-ocean is an omen of bad weather. Killing such a bird is incredibly unlucky.

Any ship at sea that encounters such a bird should have unfavorable winds, and any DM using a weather chart should add 20% to the roll for random weather. (See page 89 of the *DMG*.) Anyone foolish enough to kill an albatross brings bad luck not only upon himself but also upon the entire crew. In this case, make three rolls on the bad luck table at +3 in addition to the bad weather mentioned above.

Aurora Borealis

Also called the Burning Spears or the Merry Dancers, the appearance of the aurora borealis in regions far south of the arctic circle has always been regarded as an omen of disaster, bloodshed, and the death of kings and heroes.

Sighting the Burning Spears anywhere but the arctic signals the beginning of war in the area. This superstition doesn't usually bring good or bad luck specifically, but it can warrant a roll on the bad luck table, at the DM's discretion.

It is said that in Ulthar, which lies beyond the river Skai, no man may kill a cat ...

—H. P. Lovecraft
The Cats of Ulthar

Cats

Ancient Egyptians revered the cat, as did the followers of other gods. Later, cats were often associated with witchcraft. In the United States, the black cat is considered unlucky; in Great Britain, the opposite holds true.

Any kind of cat brought aboard a ship brings the vessel and its crew good luck and allows one roll on the good luck table for as long as the animal is aboard. Running a cat off the ship not only chases away the luck but might (50%) bring misfortune for 1d4 weeks as well (roll once on the bad luck table). If anyone is so foolish as to throw a cat off a ship at sea, it brings a storm, though all sailors know this and never do so.

In England, meeting a black cat is considered lucky. There are some variants on this belief. In East Yorkshire, it is lucky to own a black cat but unlucky to meet one. In some areas, good luck comes only to those who stroke the cat three times or greet it cordially. In other places, it is bad luck if the cat crosses the path from left to right, turns back on its tracks, or runs away from the person who sees it.

If a cat leaves a house where there is illness and cannot be coaxed back in, the sick within will soon die. A cat's sneeze means rain; if it sneezes three times, everyone in the house will contract a cold before long. In some areas it is considered unlucky to bring a cat with you when moving to a new house.

Miners often have superstitions about cats, and even saying the word "cat" in some mines compels everyone working there to find other employment (and grants the mine a roll on the bad luck table at +2 lasting for 1d4 months). In mines where this belief is held, no one works if a cat is found within unless the beast has been killed. Until the cat is dead, any who enter the place must roll twice on the bad luck table at +3.

Cats seen clawing at carpets or cushions or running crazily about are omens of strong winds (persisting for 1d4 days).

If a man who cannot count finds a four-leaf clover, is he entitled to happiness?

—Stanislaw Lem

Clover

Clover has always been seen as lucky and was believed to help protect people or animals from diabolic spells. Four-leaf clover was even more powerful due to its rarity, enabling the finder to see fairies, detect witches, and recognize evil spirits.

Anyone who finds and wears or keeps a four-leaf clover about his or her person should gain a +2 Luck bonus to Spot or Listen checks made to detect invisible creatures. If the check succeeds by 10 or more (including this bonus), the finder of the clover can actually see the invisible creatures as though under the influence of a *see invisibility* spell cast by a 3rd-level spellcaster. Four-leaf clover also grants its owner a roll on the good luck chart for as long as he holds it and it stays fresh (1d4 months if treated properly).

He ne'er considered it, as loath
To look a gift horse in the mouth.

—Samuel Butler

Horses

Horses are ridden, used for manual labor, hitched to carts, brought to war, and act as intelligent allies to paladins. Horse superstitions are as varied as their uses.

Seeing a white horse is good luck, but in some places it is customary to spit, make a wish, or cross the fingertips and keep them crossed after seeing a white horse until one spots a dog. This same ritual is often observed on seeing a piebald (lucky) or a skewbald (unlucky) to either bring or ward off luck. Others say that a horse with four white feet is unlucky, but one with a single white stocking is lucky. Elsewhere, the lucky horse is one with white stockings on one foreleg and one hind leg.

In some areas, it is lucky to lead a horse through the house. However, if a mare in foal is used to draw a corpse to the grave, it is very unlucky and results in the death of the mare, foal, or a member of the owner's family within a year. On the Welsh border, it is unlucky to harness a horse on New Year's Day or Good Friday.

The above superstitions affect people 20% of the time (or 100% if you so choose) and result in a single roll on the good or bad luck chart.

Horseshoes

Horseshoes have always been seen as a luck-bringing or protective amulet wherever horses were shod. This is partly because they are made of iron, partly because they are forged by a blacksmith, partly because they are a lunar symbol, and partly because they have seven holes (a lucky number—see below).

BAD LUCK

Roll	1d12
1	-1 to all skill checks.
2	-1 to one attribute.
3	-1 to AC.
4	-1 to attacks.
5	-1 to damage.
6	Spellcasters have a 5% chance for spells to fail, rogues have a -1 penalty to all skill checks related to their profession, warrior types have a -1 to attacks.
7	The PC suffers -1 penalty to all saves.
8	All misses have a 10% chance of resulting in a dropped weapon.
9	All weapons used against the PC have double the normal critical threat range.
10	The PC becomes the constant victim of pickpockets and cutpurses (all of whom have a +2 to skill checks).
11	The PC suffers a -1 penalty to all dice rolls.
12	The player rolls two dice for every roll, taking the worst result.
13	Bad things constantly happen to the PC (garbage dropped from upper windows, splashed by mud, and so on).

Any roll over 13 should be considered 13. DMs should modify these tables as they see fit. All modifiers should be treated as luck penalties and bonuses.

To find a horseshoe in the road is very lucky, especially if it has been cast from the hind leg of a gray mare (giving one or two good luck rolls respectively). Some believe that it must be picked up, spit upon, a wish made, and then thrown over the left shoulder. Others believe that to gain the luck, the horseshoe must be taken home and hung up. Farmers are known to hang one, three, or even seven shoes in their barns or stables to protect them from witchcraft. Sailors nail them to the masts of ships to protect them from storms and shipwrecks.

How the shoe is hung is important as well, although myths vary. Some say it must be hung with the horns pointing-downward. However, the majority claim that this spills the luck out and that the points must face upward. You should decide which holds true for your campaign world.

Ladders

Walking under a ladder has been seen as unlucky for centuries in many countries. One of the most primitive beliefs was that a ladder leaning against a wall made a triangle, the symbol of life. Walking through this triangle resulted in punishment by the spirits. In Asiatic countries, criminals were hanged from the seventh rung of a ladder propped against a tree. It was forbidden to walk under a ladder in the fear that one would meet a hanged criminal's ghost.

For those unlucky enough to walk under a ladder, there are several counter-wards, including: stopping long enough to make a wish, crossing your fingers until a dog is seen, making the "fig" sign (a fist with the thumb thrust between the middle and index fingers), spitting three times through the rungs or once over the left shoulder, or spitting on your shoes.

Ladder bad luck (if not countered by whichever of the above works in your campaign) occurs 60% of the time someone walks under a ladder. It consists of two rolls on the bad luck chart, each at +2, and lasts 1d6 weeks.

Mirrors

Primitive people believed that what looked back out at them from a reflective surface was not just a reflection, but that person's soul. Many mirror superstitions reflect this (no pun intended).

Breaking a mirror brings bad luck for seven long years, or one instance of misfortune of a more serious kind (such as the loss of a loved one or friend, or a death in the house). Mothers who let babies under twelve months of age see themselves in a mirror curse the children with permanent bad luck, stunt their growth, or condemn them to die young. After a death occurs in a house, mirrors are often veiled in an effort to keep the soul of the deceased from becoming trapped in one and slowing its trip to the afterlife. Worst of all, if someone looks in a mirror and sees no reflection, it means that death is certainly very near, for the soul itself has already left (possibly part of the reason vampires do not cast a reflection).

In game terms, if a mirror is broken, roll twice on the bad luck chart at +3 each for the next seven years of the PC's life. Any PC who looked at a mirror before twelve months of age (as determined by character history) receives one roll on the bad luck chart permanently. Finally, anyone who sees no reflection in a mirror has the mark of death on him and soon dies. DMs are cautioned against using this prophetic mirror myth for anyone except an NPC.

You asked me to find the fourteenth man for your expedition, and I chose Mr. Baggins. Just let anyone say I chose the wrong man or the wrong house, and you can stop at thirteen and have all the bad luck you like, or go back to digging coal.

—Gandalf
The Hobbit, J.R.R. Tolkien

Numbers

Numbers hold power, for good or bad, and everyone knows it.

Myth has it that all things, good and bad, happen in threes. If two things happen, look for a third. If two friends unexpectedly come visiting, a third is probably close behind. Deaths tend to happen in threes (at least to famous people), and lighting three torches, pipes, candles, or anything else on the same taper is said to bring bad luck.

The number seven is almost universally lucky. A seventh son is favored while any group of seven comrades, fellows, or adventurers can be assured of good luck as long as they are together. Seven horseshoes attached to a house or building brings good luck, and seven ominous birds seen together brings good luck (or bad luck in some cultures).

Likewise, thirteen is almost universally unlucky. The symbol of death, destruction, and misfortune, this number of guests at a table, in a room, or people in a group of adventurers or travelers is extremely unlucky. Some counter-charms exist. If thirteen guests sit at a table, they must all rise as one, hands clasped. If thirteen adventurers compose a party, they'd best hire a fourteenth to thwart ill luck. Houses with the number thirteen are unlucky, and starting any journey or new enterprise on the thirteenth of the month is also unwise.

You should adjudicate the "rules of three and seven" on a case-by-case basis. The good or bad luck brought about by numbers should last 1d4 weeks.

Thirteen is very unlucky and calls for a roll for bad luck at +2, the results of which last for 1d8 days. This misfortune affects all members of a party, although some hold that only the first or last to leave the thirteen-member dinner are afflicted with misfortune. Houses with the number thirteen have a 50% chance of bringing bad luck (one roll at +2) to each person who enters it. Anyone foolish enough to start a journey on the thirteenth of any month incurs a single roll on the bad luck table at +3 that affects all involved until the journey reaches its conclusion.

Pins

Pins can carry either good or bad luck, depending on the circumstances. The most common belief is, "See a pin and pick it up, and all the day you'll have good luck." In some areas, it is believed lucky only if the pin is pointed away from you. If the pin faces you and you pick it up, you "pick up sorrow." Others believe that seeing a pin and not picking it up is unlucky.

Pins are ill-omened gifts unless something is given in exchange for them. Sailors dislike them aboard a ship, claiming that they will cause the vessel to spring a leak. Bent pins are believed to ward off witchcraft, and some households keep a whole bottle of them hidden under some floorboard or hearth stone. Pins that have been used to hold a shroud or for any other use on a corpse are never to be used again by the living. Anyone doing so risks bad luck.

Picking up a pin pointing away from the PC calls for a normal good luck roll, while one facing toward the PC calls for a bad luck roll. Seeing a pin and not picking it up holds a 50% chance of bad luck. All of these minor magics last only for a day. If a pin used on a dead body is removed from the grave (where they are usually left) or from the body before it is buried, it carries two rolls on the bad luck chart at

+2 to whomever wears or carries it. This bad luck is permanent. Likewise, giving pins as a gift warrants a single roll on the bad luck table for the recipient for a week unless a gift is given in return.

Depend on a rabbit's foot if you will, but remember it didn't work for the rabbit.
—R.E. Shaw

Rabbit's Foot

The rabbit's foot can bring great luck, but only if several strict requirements are met. Only the left, hind foot of the animal is lucky, and then only when the animal is killed under a full moon by a crosseyed person. It must be kept in the left pocket or on the left side of the body. Any color will do.

If all of the above requirements are met (unlikely unless a PC oversees the process himself), the rabbit's foot brings two good luck rolls at +1 each for as long as the foot is carried correctly.

Salt

Spilling salt brings bad luck. It is believed by some to warn of impending trouble. Others think that spilling salt means that the victim will soon spill tears. There are a few counter-charms to ward off the bad luck. The victim can throw salt over his left shoulder to appease the evil spirits said to dwell there. He can also throw the salt into the fire to "dry up any tears quickly."

Unless the counter charm is used, spilled salt calls for a single roll on the bad luck table. Bad luck lasts for 1d4 days.

Wood

Knocking on wood has long been associated with good luck if done after boasting, making a prediction, or speaking of good fortune. Knocking three times insures that "Lady Luck" hears.

Anyone who knocks on wood three times after any of the above has a 10% chance of being affected by one roll on the good luck table for 1d4 days.

AFTERWORD

DMs should incorporate any or all of the above superstitions into their game as they see fit. Superstitions are different from region to region. Whatever is most believed is often what holds true. However, in any district, the local superstitions are well-known, and locals are usually quick to inform those who break them of the consequences.

PCs might cause a fuss when they break such a superstition and are ignorant of its effect. A PC crossing the path of a black cat or being stared at by seven birds is probably noticed and talked about, especially if they don't seem to think much of the whole situation. Someone who ignores all of the superstitions in an area is soon shunned and feared as "unlucky."

It is strongly recommended that you keep all rolls secret and don't let the PCs know exactly which superstitions hold power in their world. That is part of the mystery of such things. If the PCs know that picking up a pin is good or bad luck but the superstition about horseshoes is false, they will always ignore the latter. Any benefits or penalties caused by good or bad luck should be carefully recorded. It is also important to remember that luck changes from district to district. Keep track of these changes as well.

Since belief is an important part of the magic of superstition, those who believe are more likely to reap greater benefit (or suffer greater penalty) from any myth they cross. Those PCs who believe in the luck, good or bad, should incur greater benefits or penalties (going as high as +3 on the respective charts). However, if any PC claims he believes only in good luck and has no use for the bad, he should have the same kind of "bonus" for any superstitions of the latter that he crosses.

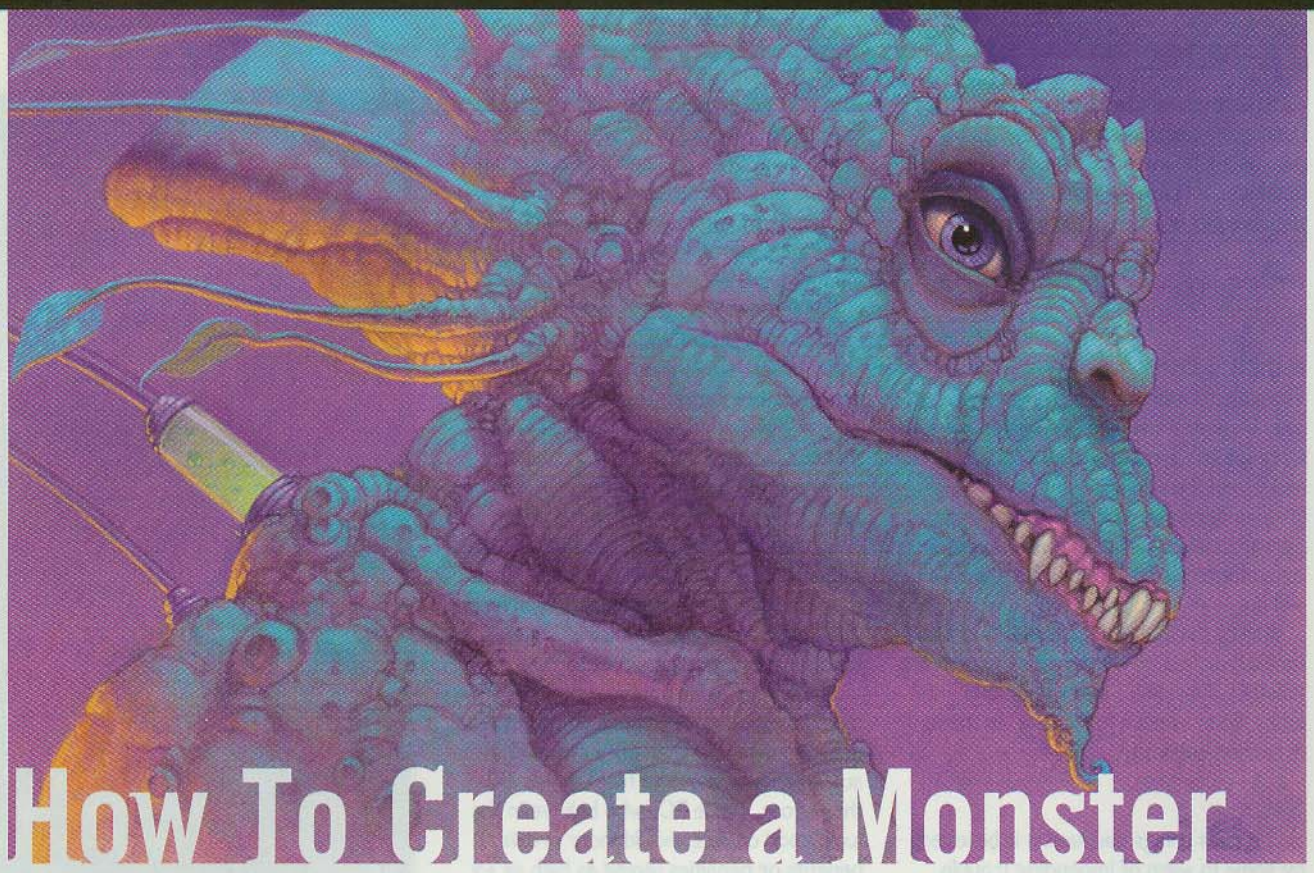
Finally, DMs are encouraged to create their own superstitions. Campaign worlds are full of unusual creatures, and superstitions should reflect this as people try to explain the unexplainable. If someone was once turned to stone by a basilisk after sighting a pegasus, it might be considered unlucky to see such a horse in the sky. If a village is constantly deluged by frogs every spring from the nearby swamp and one year someone's barn burns down after such an invasion, frogs might be seen as unlucky. Likewise, different lands might believe the opposite of whatever superstition is generally held true (such as Lovecraft's law that in Ulthar no man may kill a cat). If a deity or a well-respected person favors something, all superstitions favor it as well. In Kartakass (of the RAVENLOFT setting), wolves are seen as unlucky for the good reason that many werewolves and wolfweres live in that region.

Keep it mysterious. If the PCs start to think they know how a superstition works, have someone tell them, "That's an old wives' tale." Keep the PCs a little off balance and make sure that they are never certain what is lucky and what isn't. That's the key to superstitions. D

GOOD LUCK

Roll	1d8-1
1	+1 bonus to all skill checks.
2	+1 bonus to all saves.
3	All weapons wielded by the PC have double the normal critical threat range.
4	All attacks against the PC that result in a miss have 10% chance of making the attacker drop the weapon.
5	+1 bonus to all rolls.
6	The player rolls two dice for every roll, taking the best result.
7	Good things constantly happen to the PC (finding coin and bending to pick it up just as an enemy fires an arrow, being followed by an annoying dog only to find out its owner is offering a reward for its return, and so on).

Treat any roll of 0 as 1. Likewise, treat any roll over 7 as 7. DMs should modify these tables as they see fit. All modifiers should be treated as luck penalties and bonuses.



How To Create a Monster

Recipes for Disaster

by Skip Williams • illustrated by Darrell Riche

All the really great monsters have one thing in common—you can sum them up in just a few words. That's the first and most essential item in any monster recipe—a solid and fairly simple statement of what the monster is all about. See if you can recognize these classic beasties:

Shape-changing, undead bloodsucker

Tentacled horror that will fry your mind and eat your brain

Flying, fire-breathing reptile

Bug-eyed burrower that will make you lose your mind

Did you recognize the vampire, the mind flayer, the red dragon, and the umber hulk?

If you can't boil down your new monster idea to something as simple as these examples, you need more focus. Think harder about what your monster does.

All the elements of our monster recipe serve to put your concept into words and numbers so you can use the monster in play. There is no set order for dealing with these elements, so let's examine them in the same order they are presented in the *Monster Manual.*

MONSTER NAME

You can create a really great monster, but if you give it a silly name nobody takes the creature seriously. The best place to start is your basic monster concept. Can you come up with a descriptive name that's one or two words long? If you can, you'll often have a perfectly good name; I suspect the mind flayer was named in just this fashion. One good thing about descriptive names is that anyone who sees the name automatically has some idea of what the monster is like.

Sometimes a descriptive name doesn't cut it. Think of the umber hulk. Would it seem as fearsome if you called it the bug-eyed burrower? The confusion beast? The four-eyed horror? You'll need a name with a more literary or mythical sound for such creatures (though "umber hulk" is somewhat descriptive). Make up anything that sounds good to you, but keep the following in mind: The name should be fairly easy to read, pronounce, and spell. Also, keep it reasonably short, and if you're writing in English, spell it like a normal English word. In the new D&D game, we're making an effort to avoid irregular plurals. That means when you're talking about two or more of your monsters, just add an "s" to the name. If your name doesn't work with an "s," change it so that it does.

SIZE

A creature's size affects its combat abilities in numerous ways. In general, the bigger the creature, the nastier it is. (That was not always the case in previous editions of the game.) The *Monster*

Manual uses the size categories shown in the **Monster Size Categories** table.

When assigning a size to your monster, think about your monster concept. Does the creature need to be really strong and tough? Does it have a voracious appetite? If so, it should be big. Is the creature sneaky, agile, and easy to overlook? If so, it should be smaller.

A creature's size will affect its ability scores and its number of Hit Dice. (See the "Creature Types" section below.)

CREATURE TYPE

A creature's type defines what the creature is like and what it can do in much the same way that a character's class defines the character's abilities. A creature's type determines the size of its Hit Dice and how magic affects the creature; for example, the *hold animal* spell affects only creatures of the animal type. Type, along with size, helps determine its ability scores, number of Hit Dice, and damage ratings (as shown below).

When choosing a type for your monster, consider your concept and choose the type that best matches that concept.

READING THE TYPE ENTRIES

Each entry begins with a short description of the type. Specific information follows:

HIT DIE: The size of the type's Hit Dice.

ATTACK BONUS: The type's attack bonus as a function of its Hit Dice (each Hit Die equals one level on the appropriate column on Table 3-1 in the *Player's Handbook*).

GOOD SAVING THROWS: The type's saving bonus as a function of its Hit Dice (each Hit Die equals one level). Any saving throw type listed here uses the higher value on Table 3-1 in the *Player's Handbook*. Other saving throw types use the lower value.

SKILL POINTS: Calculate the creature's skill points according to the formula given. Most creatures gain more skill points if they have more than the minimum number of Hit Dice for their size. (Treat a fractional Hit Die as a full Hit Die when calculating skill points.) Subtract the minimum number of Hit Dice for the creature's size category from the creature's actual Hit Dice to determine how many extra Hit Dice it has.

See the section on skills below for information on spending the creature's skill points.

MATCHING YOUR CONCEPT TO A MONSTER TYPE

It's usually a good idea to develop a concept for your monster first, then pick a type that fits the concept.

ABERRATION: This type works best for creatures that look just plain weird. Aberrations with high Intelligence will have a good mix of skills and feats. They have fairly good combat abilities, but not a lot of hit points. If you want your creature to be a tough customer in combat, you'll need to give it some sort of special attack ability. For example a carrion crawler has eight tentacle attacks that cause paralysis.

ANIMAL: This type usually won't be suitable for any creature you've dreamed up yourself unless you're setting out to create a completely alien ecology and you need creatures to fill the same ecological niches that Earth animals do.

BEAST: This is a step up from a normal animal. Use it for any fairly mundane creature that doesn't have any magical abilities. Though beasts can be smarter than animals, they can have animal Intelligence (Intelligence score of 1 or 2) as well. You can use this type for real-world creatures that were extinct at the dawn of recorded history, such as dinosaurs.

CONSTRUCT: Use this type for any creature that was built rather than born.

DRAGON: Use the dragon type for variations on the basic dragon design (a flying reptile with supernatural abilities). This type is exceptionally powerful, combining excellent saves with great combat abilities and a wide selection of skills. (The game is called DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, after all.) If your creature is essentially just a flying reptile (such as a pterodactyl), the beast type is probably more suitable.

ELEMENTAL: Use the elemental type for any creature from the elemental planes.

FEY: Fey creatures include fairies and most good sylvan creatures. They also include evil creatures such as the shee and unseelie fairies.

GIANT: If your creature is human-shaped and is at least as big as an ogre, it's probably a giant, especially if it doesn't have a lot of special abilities.

HUMANOID: Anything that resembles a human and is smaller than an ogre probably should be a humanoid.

MAGICAL BEAST: If your creature resembles an animal but has supernatural or spell-like abilities, it's probably a magical beast.

MONSTROUS HUMANOID: Use this type for just about anything that combines elements of human and animal or monster anatomy unless it is weird enough to qualify as an aberration.

OOZE: If it's a mindless, amorphous blob, it's an ooze. Otherwise, it's probably an aberration.

OUTSIDER: If it comes from another plane and it's not an elemental, it's an outsider.

PLANT: If it's vegetable, it's a plant.

SHAPECHANGER: Use this type for any creature whose favorite trick is turning into something or someone else.

UNDEAD: If it's dead, but still kicking, it's undead (although it could be a construct if it's just a collection of parts animated through an arcane process). If the creature has an energy draining or ability draining ability, it's more likely undead than a construct.

VERMIN: Use this type for giant bugs and other mindless invertebrates. If your creature has an Intelligence score and you've considered the vermin type, it's probably a beast or aberration instead.

SCOTT FISCHER

Aberration

Aberrations have bizarre anatomies, strange abilities, alien mindsets, or any combination of the three (a beholder, for example).

Hit Die: d8
Attack Bonus: As cleric
Good Saving Throws: Will
Skill Points: 2 x Int score (+2/extra level)
Feats: Int modifier (+1/4 extra Hit Dice)
Notes: Aberrations have darkvision with a range of 60 feet.

Size	Str	Dex	Con	Hit Dice	Slam Damage	Bite Damage	Claw Damage	Gore Damage
Fine	1	22-23	10-11	1/16 d8-1/8 d8	—	1d2	—	1
Diminutive	1	20-21	10-11	1/8 d8-1/4 d8	—	1d3	1	1d2
Tiny	2-3	18-19	10-11	1/4 d8-1/2 d8	1	1d4	1d2	1d3
Small	6-7	16-17	10-11	1/2 d8-1d8	1d2	1d6	1d3	1d4
Medium-size	10-11	14-15	12-13	1d8-2d8	1d3	2d4	1d4	1d6
Large	18-19	12-13	16-17	2d8-4d8	1d4	2d6	1d6	1d8
Huge	26-27	12-13	20-21	4d8-16d8	1d6	2d8	2d4	2d6
Gargantuan	34-35	10-11	24-25	16d8-32d8	1d8	4d6	2d6	2d8
Colossal	42-43	10-11	28-29	32d8+	2d6	4d8	2d8	4d6

FEATS: To determine the number of feats, see the description for each monster type.

NOTES: This line contains miscellaneous information about the type, including any standard abilities the type has.

SIZE: The table shows characteristics that go with each size. These are only suggestions, not absolute limits.

STRENGTH, DEXTERITY, AND CONSTITUTION: These are typical values for a creature of the listed type and size. The creature can have higher or lower scores. See the section on ability scores for tips on assigning the creature's remaining ability scores.

 # OF HIT DICE: If a range of Hit Dice is specified, the creature's total Hit Dice should fall within the listed range unless it is unusually formidable. If only one number of Hit Dice is given, size has little effect on total Hit Dice. Treat the number given as the minimum Hit Dice for the size.

SLAM DAMAGE: The suggested damage rating for any blunt attack the creature might have (such as punches, constriction, slaps, and the like).

BITE DAMAGE: The suggested damage rating for any attack the creature delivers with its mouth or teeth.

CLAW DAMAGE: The suggested damage rating for any attack the creature makes by scratching, tearing, raking, or poking with an appendage.

GORE DAMAGE: The suggested damage rating for any attack the creature makes with a horn or antlers.

TYPE MODIFIERS

A monster associated with an element, form of energy, or the like also gets a parenthetical modifier to its type. Such modifiers include: Air, Earth, Fire, Water, Aquatic, Cold, Incorporeal, Chaotic (outsiders only), Evil (outsiders only), Good (outsiders only), Lawful (outsiders only).

A type modifier creates a subtype within a larger type, such as undead (incorporeal); links creatures that share characteristics, such as humanoid (goblinoid); or connects members of different types. For example, white dragons and frost giants belong to the dragon and giant types, respectively, but they are also of the cold subtype.

Some common type modifiers that affect the creature's abilities are listed below.

COLD: Cold creatures are immune to cold damage. They take double damage from fire unless a saving throw for half damage is allowed, in which case they take half damage on a success and double damage on a failure.

FIRE: Fire creatures are immune to fire damage. They take double damage from cold unless a saving throw for half damage is allowed, in which case they take half damage on a success and double damage on a failure.

INCORPOREAL: Incorporeal creatures have no physical bodies. They can be harmed only by other incorporeal creatures, +1 or better magic weapons, and spells, spell-like abilities, or supernatural abilities. They are immune to all nonmagical attack forms. Even when hit by spells or magic weapons, they have a

Animal

Animals are nonhumanoid creatures, usually vertebrates. If the creature lived on Earth during human history (a bear, for example), it's an animal. A creature that is just a larger or fiercer version of a normal animal is also an animal.

Hit Die: d8
Attack Bonus: As cleric
Good Saving Throws: Fortitude or Reflex
Skill Points: 10+3
Feats: None
Notes: Animals have Intelligence scores of 1 or 2 (predatory animals tend to have Intelligence scores of 2). Animals have low-light vision.

Size	Str	Dex	Con	Hit Dice	Slam Damage	Bite Damage	Claw Damage	Gore Damage
Fine	1	22-23	10-11	1/16 d8-1/8 d8	—	1	—	1
Diminutive	1	20-21	10-11	1/8 d8-1/4 d8	—	1d2	1	1d2
Tiny	2-3	18-19	10-11	1/4 d8-1/2 d8	1	1d3	1d2	1d3
Small	6-7	16-17	10-11	1/2 d8-1d8	1d2	1d4	1d3	1d4
Medium-size	10-11	14-15	12-13	1d8-2d8	1d3	1d6	1d4	1d6
Large	18-19	12-13	16-17	2d8-4d8	1d4	1d8	1d6	1d8
Huge	26-27	12-13	20-21	4d8-16d8	1d6	2d6	2d4	2d6
Gargantuan	34-35	10-11	24-25	16d8-32d8	1d8	2d8	2d6	2d8
Colossal	42-43	10-11	28-29	32d8+	2d6	4d6	2d8	4d6

50% chance to ignore any damage from a corporeal source (except for force effects, such as *magic missile,* or attacks made with *ghost touch* weapons). An incorporeal creature has no natural armor but has a deflection bonus equal to its Charisma modifier (always at least +1).

Incorporeal creatures can pass through solid objects at will, but not force effects. Their touch attacks pass through natural armor, armor, and shields, although deflection bonuses and force effects (such as *mage armor*) work normally against them.

Incorporeal creatures move silently and cannot be heard with Listen checks if they don't wish it. They have no Strength scores, so their Dexterity modifiers apply to both their melee and ranged attacks.

HUMANOID TYPE MODIFIERS: In general each species of humanoid is its own subtype. For example, the type entry for an elf is Humanoid (Elf).

HIT DICE

List the number and size (number of sides) of Hit Dice and any bonus hit points. The size of the Hit Dice will depend on the creature's type. The number of Hit Dice will be a function of the creature's type and sometimes its size. The number of bonus hit points is a function of the creature's Hit Dice and Constitution score.

A parenthetical listing of the creature's average hit points follows the Hit Dice listing. To calculate the creature's average hit points, take the average value of each Hit Die, apply the creature's Constitution modifier (a creature always has at least 1 hit point per Hit Die), multiply by the number of Hit Dice, and round down.

Average Die Size	Hit Die Values Average
1d4	2.5
1d6	3.5
1d8	4.5
1d10	5.5
1d12	6.5

INITIATIVE

This is the creature's modifier to initiative rolls. A parenthetical note shows where the bonuses come from (most commonly the creature's Dexterity modifier and the Improved Initiative feat if the creature has it).

Beast

Beasts are vertebrates with reasonably normal anatomies and no magical abilities (an owlbear, for example).

MATT MITCHELL

Hit Die.....d10
Attack Bonus.....As cleric
Good Saving Throws.....Fortitude and Reflex
Skill Points.....2 x Int score (+1/extra level)
Feats.....None
Notes.....Beasts have low-light vision and darkvision with a range of 60 feet.

Size	Str	Dex	Con	Hit Dice	Slam Damage	Bite Damage	Claw Damage	Gore Damage
Fine	1	22-23	10-11	1/16 d10-1/8 d10	—	1	—	1
Diminutive	1	20-21	10-11	1/8 d10-1/4 d10	—	1d2	1	1d2
Tiny	2-3	18-19	10-11	1/4 d10-1/2 d10	1	1d3	1d2	1d3
Small	6-7	16-17	10-11	1/2 d10-1d10	1d2	1d4	1d3	1d4
Medium-size	10-11	14-15	12-13	1d10-2d10	1d3	1d6	1d4	1d6
Large	18-19	12-13	16-17	2d10-4d10	1d4	1d8	1d6	1d8
Huge	26-27	12-13	20-21	4d10-16d10	1d6	2d6	2d4	2d6
Gargantuan	34-35	10-11	24-25	16d10-32d10	1d8	2d8	2d6	2d8
Colossal	42-43	10-11	28-29	32d10+	2d6	4d6	2d8	4d6

SPEED

Give the creature's land movement rate in feet per move. All speeds must be evenly divisible by 5 feet. Most bipeds have a speed of 30 feet (human speed) if they are at least Medium-size; bipeds that are smaller than Medium-size have speeds of 20 feet. Most quadrupeds have speeds of at least 30 feet (unless they are remarkably slow) regardless of size. Predators or creatures noted for fast movement should have speeds of 40 feet or more.

If the creature has other modes of movement, list all that apply in alphabetical order. If the creature wears armor, list its reduced movement rate in a parenthetical following the main entry.

The other modes of movement are:

BURROW: The ability to move by digging through the ground.

CLIMB: The ability to move up and down vertical surfaces. Creatures with a climb speed have the Climb skill at no cost and gain a +8 bonus to Climb checks. A climb movement rate usually should be about half the creature's land movement rate.

FLY: The creature can fly through the air. All flying speeds must include a parenthetical note about its maneuverability, using one of the following terms:

Perfect: The creature is as maneuverable as a classic UFO. It can hover in place and freely turn. It can freely change its direction of movement, flying upward, downward, forward, or backward, all in the same round. It can fly straight up with no loss of speed, and can fly downward at any angle at double its normal rate of speed.

This kind of super maneuverability is fairly rare. Creatures that rely on wings for flight probably shouldn't be this maneuverable unless they are very small or have wings that beat very fast. Creatures native to the Plane of Elemental Air, incorporeal creatures, and other wingless creatures most often have this kind of maneuverability.

Good: The creature can fly like a hummingbird. It can turn up to 90 degrees in any direction (even up and down) for each 5 feet of forward movement. It can also spend 5 feet of movement to turn 90 degrees in place, but no more than 180 degrees at once.

The creature can hover and fly backwards, but reversing direction costs it 5 feet of movement. It moves

Note: If a monster 1 Hit Dice or less has a class (a kobold fighter, for example) the attack bonus, skill points, and feats are calculated according to the character class, not according to the Hit Dice of the monster. If a monster with more than 1 HD has a class, it retains its monster abilites in additon to its class abilities.

at half speed when flying upward at any angle, including straight up. The creature can fly downward at any angle at double speed and can fly both up and down in the same round.

Giant insects, fey creatures, and some outsiders have this kind of maneuverability.

Average: The creature can fly as well as a small bird or bat. It can turn up to 45 degrees in any direction (even up and down) for each 5 feet of forward movement. It can also spend 5 feet of movement to turn 45 degrees in place, but no more than 90 degrees at once.

The creature cannot hover or fly backwards, and each round it must move forward at least half its normal flying speed or it stalls. It can move upward at a 60 degree angle, and it moves at half speed when flying upward at any angle. The creature can fly downward at any angle at double speed. It can fly both up and down in the same round, but each climb or dive must be separated by at least 5 feet of level movement.

Most small, agile flyers have this kind of maneuverability.

Poor: The creature flies as well as a very large bird. It can turn up to 45 degrees in any direction (even up and down) for each 5 feet of forward movement. It cannot turn in place.

The creature cannot hover or fly backwards, and each round it must move forward at least half its normal flying speed or it stalls. It can move upward or downward at a 45 degree angle. The creature moves at half speed when flying upward and double speed when flying downward. It can fly both up and down in the same round, but each climb or dive must be separated by at least 10 feet of level movement.

Most big flying monsters have this kind of maneuverability.

Clumsy: The creature can barely fly at all; it is about as graceful in flight as a barnyard chicken. It can turn up to 45 degrees in any direction (even up and down) but each turn must be separated by 5 feet of straight and level movement.

The creature cannot hover or fly backwards, and each round it must move forward at least half its normal flying speed or it stalls. It can move upward or downward at a 45 degree angle. The creature moves at half speed when flying upward and double speed when flying downward. It cannot fly both upward and downward during the same round.

SWIM: The creature can move through water without making a Swim check. If it should ever need to make a Swim check (to avoid a hazard, for example) it gets a +8 bonus .

Do not create new modes of movement.

WAYNE REYNOLDS

Construct

Constructs are animated objects or artificially constructed creatures (a golem, for example).

Hit Die.....d10
Attack Bonus.....As cleric
Good Saving Throws.....None
Skill Points.....None
Feats.....None
Notes.....Constructs usually have no Intelligence scores and never have Constitution scores. Constructs are immune to mind-influencing effects (*charms*, compulsions, phantasms, patterns, and morale effects) and to poison, *sleep*, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and necromantic effects.

Constructs are not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, ability drain, or energy drain. They are immune to anything that requires a Fortitude save (unless the effect also works on objects). Constructs are not at risk of death from massive damage (see Injury and Death in Chapter 8: Combat in the *Player's Handbook*), but when reduced to 0 hit points or less, they are immediately destroyed. Since it was never alive, a construct cannot be *raised* or *resurrected*. Constructs have darkvision with a range of 60 feet.

Size	Str	Dex	Con	Hit Dice	Slam Damage	Bite Damage	Claw Damage	Gore Damage
Fine	4-5	18-19	–	1/16 d10-1/8 d10	1	–	–	1
Diminutive	6-7	16-17	–	1/8 d10-1/4 d10	1d2	–	1	1d2
Tiny	8-9	14-15	–	1/4 d10-1/2 d10	1d3	1	1d2	1d3
Small	10-11	12-13	–	1/2 d10-1d10	1d4	1d2	1d3	1d4
Medium-size	12-13	10-11	–	1d10-2d10	1d6	1d3	1d4	1d6
Large	20-21	10-11	–	2d10-4d10	1d8	1d4	1d6	1d8
Huge	28-29	8-9	–	4d10-16d10	2d6	1d6	2d4	2d6
Gargantuan	32-33	6-7	–	16d10-32d10	2d8	1d8	2d6	2d8
Colossal	36-37	4-5	–	32d10+	4d6	2d6	2d8	4d6

ABERRATION, BEAST, OR MAGICAL BEAST?

Sometimes these three creature types can be hard to sort out. Here are some pointers:

- Anything that's just a collection of animal parts, with no supernatural or spell-like abilities, is a beast. For example, an owlbear is a beast.
- Anything that's a collection of animal parts with spell-like or supernatural abilities is a magical beast. For example, a chimera is a magical beast.
- If the creature doesn't really resemble anything found in nature and if it has any special abilities it's an aberration. For example, both the carrion crawler and the beholder are aberrations. Something odd-looking that has no special abilities is probably a beast.

ARMOR CLASS

Give the creature's Armor Class for normal combat.

All creatures start with a base Armor Class of 10, which is modified by the creature's size, Dexterity, and armor (usually natural armor).

Don't just pick an Armor Class number out of thin air. Consider the creature's anatomy and overall toughness. The table below shows some typical values for natural armor.

TYPICAL NATURAL ARMOR VALUES

Type	Bonus	Example Creature
Normal Skin	+0	Human
Thick Skin or fur	+1 to +3	Baboon (+1) Black Bear (+2) Shark (+3)
Tough Hide	+4 to +7	Crocodile (+4) Polar Bear (+5) Boar (+6) Rhinoceros (+7)
Scales	+5 to +10 or more	Dragon (varies)

Don't forget to include the creature's size modifier in your final Armor Class calculation. If the creature wears armor, its natural armor value stacks with the value of its armor. For example, a centaur is a Large creature with a Dexterity score of 14 (+2 AC bonus) and +2 natural armor. If the centaur carries a large shield and wears a chain shirt, its Armor Class will be 19 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +2 natural, +2 large shield, +4 chain shirt).

ATTACKS

List all the creature's physical attacks; natural weapon attacks first (if any), followed by weapon attacks (if any).

NATURAL WEAPONS: Give the number of attacks along with the weapon used (for example: bite, 2 claws, sting) along with the attack bonus and the type of attack (melee or ranged). The first weapon (or weapons) you list will be the creature's primary weapon. Primary weapons use the creature's full attack bonus, no matter how many primary weapons there are. A creature's attack bonus depends on its type, Hit Dice, size, and Strength modifier (for melee attacks) or Dexterity modifier (for ranged attacks). Don't forget the size modifier.

All other natural weapons are secondary. Reduce the creature's attack bonus by 5 for all secondary weapons, no matter how many there are. Creatures with the Multiattack feat suffer only a -2 penalty to secondary attacks.

A monster threatens critical hits on a roll of 20 unless you specify otherwise; do not specify otherwise unless you have a good reason to do so.

In general, a creature attacks once with each natural weapon it has. For most monsters, that will be two claws and a bite (or the other way around).

Dragon

Dragons are reptilian creatures, usually winged, with magical or unusual abilities (a red dragon, for example). Any dragon with magical abilities or breath weapons should include an elemental subtype (air, earth, fire, or water).

TODD LOCKWOOD

Hit Die.....d12
Attack Bonus.....As fighter
Good Saving Throws.....Fortitude, Reflex, and Will
Skill Points.....6/level (Int modifier applies per level)
Feats.....1 (+1/4 extra Hit Dice)
Notes.....Dragons are immune to *sleep* and paralysis effects. Dragons have darkvision with a range of 60 feet and low-light vision.

Size	Str	Dex	Con	Hit Dice	Slam Damage	Bite Damage	Claw Damage	Gore Damage
Fine	2-3	14-15	10-11	1d6-1d12	–	1d2	1	1
Diminutive	6-7	12-13	10-11	1d12-3d12	–	1d3	1d2	1d2
Tiny	10-11	10-11	12-13	3d12-6d12	–	1d4	1d3	1d3
Small	12-13	10-11	12-13	4d12-9d12	–	1d6	1d4	1d4
Medium-size	14-15	10-11	14-15	7d12-13d12	1d4	1d8	1d6	1d6
Large	18-19	10-11	16-17	10d12-21d12	1d6	2d6	1d8	1d8
Huge	26-27	10-11	20-21	19d12-33d12	1d8	2d8	2d6	2d6
Gargantuan	34-35	10-11	24-25	27d12-38d12	2d6	4d6	2d8	2d8
Colossal	42-43	10-11	28-29	38d12+	2d8	4d8	4d6	4d6

Elemental

Elementals are composed of one of the four classical elements (an invisible stalker, for example). All elementals require an elemental subtype (air, earth, fire, or water).

TODD LOCKWOOD

Hit Die.....d8
Attack Bonus.....As cleric
Good Saving Throws.....Varies by subtype: Reflex (Air, Fire), Fortitude (Earth, Water)
Skill Points.....2 x Int score (+2/extra level)
Feats.....Int modifier (+1/4 extra Hit Dice)
Notes.....Elementals are immune to poison, *sleep*, paralysis, and stunning.

Elementals have no clear front or back and are therefore not subject to critical hits or flanking. Unless noted otherwise, they have darkvision with a range of 60 feet.

A slain elemental cannot be *raised* or *resurrected*, although a *wish* or *miracle* spell can restore it to life.

Size	Str	Dex	Con	Hit Dice	Slam Damage	Bite Damage	Claw Damage	Gore Damage
Fine	4-5	18-19	10-11	1/8 d8-1/4 d8	1	1	–	–
Diminutive	6-7	16-17	10-11	1/4 d8-1/2 d8	1d2	1d2	1	–
Tiny	8-9	14-15	10-11	1/2 d8-1d8	1d3	1d3	1d2	1
Small	10-11	12-13	10-11	1d8-2d8	1d4	1d4	1d3	1d2
Medium-size	12-13	10-11	12-13	2d8-4d8	1d6	1d6	1d4	1d3
Large	20-21	10-11	16-17	4d8-8d8	1d8	1d8	1d6	1d4
Huge	24-25	8-9	20-21	8d8-16d8	2d6	2d6	2d4	1d6
Gargantuan	28-29	6-7	24-25	16d8-32d8	2d8	2d8	2d6	1d8
Colossal	32-33	4-5	28-29	32d8+	4d6	4d6	2d8	2d6

WEAPONS: Creatures that use weapons follow all the rules characters do, including multiple attacks with the same weapon and penalties for using two weapons at once. List all the steps in a multiple attack sequence, and include all adjustments that apply. (See the section on natural weapons, above.)

DAMAGE

List the damage that each of the creature's attacks inflict; use the same order you used for the creature's attacks. The damage rating will depend on the creature's size and type, as noted in the section on types, above. Particularly tough or weak creatures might have stronger or weaker attacks. In general you can move up or down one or two lines, or left or right one column on the table. For example, a Medium-size vermin's bite usually has a damage rating of 1d6, but it could be as low as 1d3 or as much as 2d6. Use the 1d3 rating for a creature with a very small or weak mouth, and the 2d6 rating for a creature with large or very powerful mouth parts.

NATURAL WEAPONS: A creature's primary attack gets the creature's full damage bonus from Strength (1 ½ times the bonus if it is the creature's sole attack). Secondary attacks gain half the creature's Strength bonus.

If any of the creature's attacks also cause some special effect other than damage (poison, disease, energy drain, paralysis, and so on), list it here. Use the word "and" to indicate that the two items go together. For example: Sting 1d6 and poison.

Unless you note otherwise, creatures inflict double damage with a critical hit; don't note otherwise without a good reason.

WEAPON-USING CREATURES: Creatures that use weapons follow all the rules characters do; two-handed weapons gain 1 ½ times the creature's Strength bonus. Secondary weapons gain ½ the creature's Strength bonus.

MONSTER SIZE CATEGORIES

Size	Examples	Modifier[1]	Dimension[2]	Typical Weight[3]
Colossal	Moby Dick	-8	64 ft. or more	250,000 lb. or more
Gargantuan	whale	-4	32-64 ft.	32,000 lb. to 250,000 lb.
Huge	giraffe, elephant	-2	16-32 ft.	4,000 lb. to 32,000 lb.
Large	gorilla, horse	-1	8-16 ft.	500 lb. to 4,000 lb.
Medium-size	human, pony	0	4-8 ft.	60 lb. to 500 lb.
Small	halfling, coyote	+1	2-4 ft.	8 lb. to 60 lb.
Tiny	cat	+2	1-2 ft.	1 lb. to 8 lb.
Diminutive	toad	+4	6 in. to 1 ft.	⅛ lb. to 1 lb.
Fine	housefly	+8	6 in. or less	⅛ lb. or less

1. This modifier applies to the creature's Armor Class and attack rolls.
2. This indicates either the biped's height or the quadruped's body length (nose to base of tail).
3. It is important to remember that a creature's total volume is what determines its size. If a creature is significantly more or less dense than a regular animal, then its weight is a poor indicator of size. For example, the ghost of a human weighs nothing but is still Medium-size.

RK POST

Fey

Fey are creatures with supernatural abilities and connections to nature or to some other force or place (a dryad, for example). They are usually human-shaped.

Hit Die.....d6
Attack Bonus.....As wizard
Good Saving Throws.....Reflex and Will
Skill Points.....3 x Int score (+2/extra level)
Feats.....1 + Int modifier (+1/4 extra Hit Dice)
Notes.....Fey have low-light vision.

Size	Str	Dex	Con	Hit Dice	Slam Damage	Bite Damage	Claw Damage	Gore Damage
Fine	1	22-23	10-11	1/16 d6-1/8 d6	—	—	—	1
Diminutive	1	20-21	10-11	1/8d6-1/4 d6	—	1	1	1d2
Tiny	2-3	18-19	10-11	1/4 d6-1/2 d6	1	1d2	1d2	1d3
Small	6-7	16-17	10-11	1/2 d6-1d6	1d2	1d3	1d3	1d4
Medium-size	10-11	12-13	10-11	1d6-2d6	1d3	1d4	1d4	1d6
Large	14-15	12-13	12-13	2d6-4d6	1d4	1d6	1d6	1d8
Huge	18-19	12-13	14-15	4d6-16d6	1d6	1d8	2d4	2d6
Gargantuan	22-23	10-11	16-17	16d6-32d6	1d8	2d6	2d6	2d8
Colossal	26-27	10-11	18-19	32d6+	2d6	2d8	2d8	4d6

FACE/REACH

This says how much space the creature needs to fight effectively and how close it has to be to an opponent to threaten that opponent. (See Big and Little Creatures in Combat, in Chapter 8 of the *Player's Handbook*.) List the face number first (this shows how much space the creature needs to fight), width first, length second. List the reach number second. If the creature has exceptional reach (due to a weapon or for any other reason), note the extra reach in parenthesis.

A creature's Face/Reach entry depends on its size and anatomy. (See the **Face/Reach by Size** chart.)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

List all the creature's special attacks in the order they are most likely to be used in play. If two special attacks are equally important, list them in alphabetical order.

A special attack is anything the creature uses offensively to harm or hinder another creature. Use one or two-word descriptions.

Brief notes on common special attacks are listed in the introduction to the *Monster Manual*.

If the creature has no special attacks, drop this line.

SPECIAL QUALITIES

A special quality is any ability the creature can use to protect itself. The special quality line is also the catch-all for anything the creature might do or have that does not logically go in another line in the statistics listing. As with special attacks, use one or two-word descriptions.

Brief notes on common special qualities are listed in the introduction to the *Monster Manual*.

If the creature has no special qualities, drop this line.

SAVING THROWS

List the creature's saving throw bonuses. The creature's base saving throw bonuses depend on its type and Hit Dice. Include all adjustments that apply to each save, provided they apply all the time (such as ability score modifiers, armor modifiers, and racial bonuses). Conditional saving throw bonuses should be noted on the creature's special qualities line and explained in the Combat section of the creature's description.

ABILITIES

List all six of the creature's ability scores, in order: Str, Dex, Con, Int, Wis, Cha.

ASSIGNING ABILITIES

Physical abilities such as Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution are largely a function of a creature's type and size. In general, the bigger a creature gets, the better its Strength and Constitution scores and the lower its Dexterity. Exceptions abound. The suggestions given on the type tables assume creatures with fairly sedentary, non-predatory lifestyles. Hunting creatures need better Strength and Dexterity scores. Tree-dwelling, climbing, or swift creatures need better Dexterity scores. Tough or resilient creatures need higher Constitution scores.

The remaining attributes (Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma) are seldom a function of size. You'll need to assign values to these abilities to match your concept of your creature.

Intelligence: Reflects how well the creature learns and reasons. In most cases, it affects how many skills and feats the creature has. A creature needs an Intelligence score of at least 3 to speak a language; anything less makes the creature no smarter than a typical animal. Intelligence scores of 4 to 6 represent a limited ability to reason and a certain low cunning.

Intelligence scores of 7 to 9 begin to reach into the human range. Scores of 10 to 12 cover the human norm. Scores of 13 to 18 reflect above average to genius level Intelligence. Scores of 19 and above represent superhuman intellect.

Wisdom: Reflects the creature's level of perception and strength of will. A creature can have a very low Intelligence score and still be very wise. Wisdom scores of 3 or less indicate a creature that is barely sentient. Scores of 4 to 6 represent a limited ability to perceive the environment and react to it. Scores of 7 to 9 approach the human range of perception. Scores of

Giant

Giants are humanoid creatures of great strength, usually of at least Large size (an ogre, for example).

Hit Die.....d8
Attack Bonus.....As cleric
Good Saving Throws.....Fortitude
Skill Points.....6 + Int modifier (+1/extra level)
Feats.....1 (+1/4 extra Hit Dice)
Notes.....Giants have darkvision with a range of 60 feet. Giants are proficient with all simple weapons and with any weapons listed in their entries.

SCOTT FISCHER

Size	Str	Dex	Con	Hit Dice	Slam Damage	Bite Damage	Claw Damage	Gore Damage
Fine	1	12-13	10-11	1/16 d8-1/8 d8	–	–	–	1
Diminutive	1	12-13	10-11	1/8 d8-1/4 d8	–	1	1	1d2
Tiny	2-3	10-11	10-11	1/4 d8-1/2 d8	1	1d2	1d2	1d3
Small	6-7	10-11	10-11	1/2 d8-1d8	1d2	1d3	1d3	1d4
Medium-size	14-15	10-11	12-13	1d8-2d8	1d3	1d4	1d4	1d6
Large	20-21	8-9	14-15	2d8-4d8	1d4	1d6	1d6	1d8
Huge	24-25	8-9	18-19	4d8-16d8	1d6	1d8	2d4	2d6
Gargantuan	28-29	8-9	22-23	16d8-32d8	1d8	2d6	2d6	2d8
Colossal	32-33	6-7	26-27	32d8+	2d6	2d8	2d8	4d6

Humanoid

Humanoids usually have two arms, two legs, and one head, or a humanlike torso, arms, and head. They have few or no supernatural or extraordinary abilities, and usually are Small or Medium-size (a goblin, for example).

Hit Die.....d8
Attack Bonus.....As cleric
Good Saving Throws.....Varies (usually Reflex)
Skill Points.....6 + Int modifier (+1/extra level)
Feat.....1 + (1/4 extra Hit Dice)
Notes.....Every humanoid has a type modifier

SAM WOOD

Size	Str	Dex	Con	Hit Dice	Slam Damage	Bite Damage	Claw Damage	Gore Damage
Fine	1	12-13	10-11	1/16 d8-1/8 d8	–	–	–	1
Diminutive	1	12-13	10-11	1/8 d8-1/4 d8	–	1	1	1d2
Tiny	2-3	10-11	10-11	1/4 d8-1/2 d8	1	1d2	1d2	1d3
Small	6-7	10-11	10-11	1/4 d8-1d8	1d2	1d3	1d3	1d4
Medium-size	10-11	10-11	10-11	1d8-2d8	1d3	1d4	1d4	1d6
Large	14-15	8-9	14-15	2d8-4d8	1d4	1d6	1d6	1d8
Huge	18-19	8-9	18-19	4d8-16d8	1d6	1d8	2d4	2d6
Gargantuan	22-23	6-7	22-23	16d8-32d8	1d8	2d6	2d6	2d8
Colossal	26-27	4-5	26-27	32d8+	2d6	2d8	2d8	4d6

SAM WOOD

Magical Beast

Magical beasts are similar to beasts (see above), but have supernatural or extraordinary abilities (a displacer beast, for example).

Hit Die.....d10
Attack Bonus.....As fighter
Good Saving Throws.....Fortitude and Reflex
Skill Points.....2 x Int score (+1/extra level)
Feats.....1 + Int modifier (+1/4 extra Hit Dice)
Notes.....Magical beasts have darkvision with a range of 60 feet and low-light vision.

Size	Str	Dex	Con	Hit Dice	Slam Damage	Bite Damage	Claw Damage	Gore Damage
Fine	1	22-23	10-11	1/16 d10-1/8 d10	–	1	–	1
Diminutive	1	20-21	10-11	1/8 d10-1/4 d10	–	1d2	1	1d2
Tiny	2-3	18-19	10-11	1/4 d10-1/2 d10	1	1d3	1d2	1d3
Small	6-7	16-17	10-11	1/2 d10-1d10	1d2	1d4	1d3	1d4
Medium-size	10-11	14-15	12-13	1d10-2d10	1d3	1d6	1d4	1d6
Large	18-19	12-13	16-17	2d10-4d10	1d4	1d8	1d6	1d8
Huge	26-27	12-13	20-21	4d10-16d10	1d6	2d6	2d4	2d6
Gargantuan	34-35	10-11	24-25	16d10-32d10	1d8	2d8	2d6	2d8
Colossal	42-43	10-11	28-29	32d10+	2d6	4d6	2d8	4d6

DAVID MARTIN

Monstrous Humanoid

These are humanoid creatures with monstrous or animalistic features, often having supernatural abilities (a medusa, for example).

Hit Die.....d8
Attack Bonus.....As fighter
Good Saving Throws.....Reflex and Will
Skill Points.....2 x Int Score (+2/extra level)
Feats.....1 + Int modifier (+1/4 extra Hit Dice)

Size	Str	Dex	Con	Hit Dice	Slam Damage	Bite Damage	Claw Damage	Gore Damage
Fine	1	22-23	10-11	1/16 d8-1/8 d8	–	–	–	1
Diminutive	1	20-21	10-11	1/8 d8-1/4 d8	–	1	1	1d2
Tiny	2-3	18-19	10-11	1/4 d8-1/2 d8	1	1d2	1d2	1d3
Small	6-7	16-17	10-11	1/2 d8-1d8	1d2	1d3	1d3	1d4
Medium-size	10-11	12-13	10-11	1d8-2d8	1d3	1d4	1d4	1d6
Large	18-19	12-13	12-13	2d8-4d8	1d4	1d6	1d6	1d8
Huge	26-27	12-13	14-15	4d8-16d8	1d6	1d8	2d4	2d6
Gargantuan	34-35	10-11	16-17	16d8-32d8	1d8	2d6	2d6	2d8
Colossal	42-43	10-11	18-19	32d8+	2d6	2d8	2d8	4d6

10 to 12 cover the human norm. Scores of 13 to 18 reflect acute senses and unusual guile. Scores of 19 and above represent superhuman perceptions.

Charisma: Reflects the creature's sense of self and ability to influence other creatures for good or for ill (a particularly scary creature will have a high Charisma score). A creature can have a very low Intelligence score and still be very charismatic. Charisma scores of 3 or less indicate a creature that is barely sentient. Scores of 4 to 6 represent a limited sense of self. Scores of 7 to 9 approach the human range of self awareness. Scores of 10 to 12 cover the human norm. Scores of 13 to 18 reflect a strong presence. Scores of 19 and above represent superhuman Charisma.

NONABILITIES

Some creatures lack some ability scores. These creatures do not have ability ratings of 0, they lack the ability altogether. The ability modifier for a nonability is +0 (but see below):

Strength: Any creature that can physically manipulate other things has at least 1 point of Strength.

A creature with no Strength score can't exert force, usually because it has no physical body (such as a ghost) or because it doesn't move (such as a shrieker). If the creature can attack, apply its Dexterity modifier to its base attack in place of its Strength modifier. The creature cannot make Strength checks.

Dexterity: Any creature that can move has at least 1 point of Dexterity.

A creature with no Dexterity score can't move (such as a shrieker). If it can act (such as by casting spells), apply its Intelligence modifier to its Initiative roll instead of its Dexterity modifier. The creature cannot make Dexterity checks and automatically fails all Reflex saves.

Constitution: Any living creature has at least 1 point of Constitution.

A creature with no Constitution has no body (such as a specter) or no metabolism (such as a golem). The creature is immune to anything that requires a Fortitude save—unless the effect works on objects. For example, a zombie is immune to any type of poison, but is susceptible to a *disintegrate* spell. The creature automatically passes most Constitution checks, and it uses its Charisma modifier for Concentration checks.

Intelligence: Any creature that can think, learn, or remember has at least 1 point of Intelligence.

A creature with no Intelligence score is an automaton; it operates according to simple instincts or programmed instructions. It is immune to all mind-influencing effects (*charms*, compulsions, phantasms, patterns, and morale effects). It fails all Intelligence checks.

Wisdom: Any creature that can perceive its environment in any way has at least 1 point of Wisdom

Anything with no Wisdom score is an object, not a creature. Anything without a Wisdom score also has no Charisma score and vice versa.

Charisma: Any creature that is capable of telling the difference between itself and things that are not itself has at least 1 point of Charisma.

Anything with no Charisma score is an object, not a creature.

SKILLS

List the creature's skills in alphabetical order, along with each skill's score; add all adjustments that apply to each skill, provided they apply all the time (such as ability score modifiers, armor modifiers, and racial bonuses). Some skills have additional modifiers that you must take into account (such as the Hide skill, which has a size modifier). Other skills might be affected by the feats you choose for the creature. If the creature has conditional ability adjustments, do not apply them. Instead mark the skill score with an asterisk and note the conditional modifier in the Skills section of the creature's description.

ASSIGNING SKILLS: Assign whatever skills you think the creature ought to have. The number of skill points the creature has depends on its type, Hit Dice, and Intelligence.

Assume that any skill you choose for the creature is a class skill (costs 1 skill point per rank). Spend all the creature's skill points. When assigning Craft or Knowledge skills you can list "Any" as the skill type, as in Craft (Any) +6.

As always, it is useful to consider your concept when assigning skills. Creatures that live by hunting need Hide, Spot, and Listen skills, and probably the Move Silently skill. Creatures that use spells or spell-like abilities need the Concentration skill and probably the Spellcraft skill. Creatures that do not have a climb or swim speed might benefit from the Climb or Swim skills. Skills such as Balance and Escape Artist can be useful for almost any creature.

MAXIMUM SKILL RANK: The maximum rank for any skill is the creature's Hit Dice + 3.

SKILL BONUSES: Often a creature will need a better skill score than its abilities and skill points allow. In such cases, it's a good idea to assign it a racial bonus (which works all the time), or a specific circumstance bonus. For example most big cats get a bonus to Hide and Move Silently, and even bigger conditional Hide and Move Silently bonuses when they're in the right terrain. They'd have a hard time surviving as predators without them.

FEATS

List all the creature's feats alphabetically by name.

ASSIGNING FEATS: The charts show the number of feats a creature can have. Note that very weak creatures can benefit from the Weapon Finesse feat, which allows the creature to use its Dexterity bonus for melee attacks (very useful for Tiny, Small, and Diminutive creatures). Likewise, very big or strong creatures can benefit from the Power Attack feat, which allows them to convert attack bonuses into extra damage. When in doubt, most creatures can benefit from the feats that improve saving throws (Great Fortitude, Lightning Reflexes, and Iron Will). In general, however, you should assign feats with your creature concept in mind, just as you did for skills. For example, spellcasting creatures can benefit from Combat Casting. Creatures that depend on their senses to locate prey or alert them to danger can benefit from the Alertness feat. Creatures that attack from ambush can use Improved Initiative.

CLIMATE/TERRAIN

Consider where the creature lives. Use the terms listed below. You can list multiple types, but do not combine types. For example, hills or forests is okay, but hilly forests is not okay. You can substitute the word "Any" for a climate or terrain. As in Any Mountains, Any Cold, or

Ooze

Oozes are amorphous or mutable creatures (a gelatinous cube, for example).

TODD LOCKWOOD

Hit Die.....d10
Attack Bonus.....As cleric
Good Saving Throws.....None
Skill Points.....None
Feats.....None
Notes.....Oozes are immune to poison, *sleep*, paralysis, stunning, and *polymorphing*. They have no clear front or back and are therefore not subject to critical hits or flanking. Oozes are blind but have the blindsight special quality. They have no Intelligence scores and are therefore immune to all mind-influencing effects (*charms*, compulsions, phantasms, patterns, and morale effects).

Oozes have no natural armor ratings, but they are nevertheless difficult to kill because their bodies are mostly simple protoplasm. This is reflected by bonus hit points (in addition to those from Hit Dice and Constitution scores) according to size, as shown below.

Ooze Size	Bonus Hit Points
Fine	—
Diminutive	—
Tiny	—
Small	5
Medium-size	10
Large	15
Huge	20
Gigantic	30
Colossal	40

Size	Str	Dex	Con	Hit Dice	Slam Damage	Bite Damage	Claw Damage	Gore Damage
Fine	4-5	18-19	10-11	1/16 d10-1/8 d10	1	1	—	—
Diminutive	6-7	16-17	10-11	1/8 d10-1/4 d10	1d2	1d2	1	—
Tiny	8-9	14-15	10-11	1/4d10-1/2 d10	1d3	1d3	1d2	1
Small	10-11	12-13	10-11	1/2 d10-1d10	1d4	1d4	1d3	1d2
Medium-size	12-13	10-11	10-11	1d10-2d10	1d6	1d6	1d4	1d3
Large	20-21	10-11	14-15	2d10-4d10	1d8	1d8	1d6	1d4
Huge	28-29	8-9	18-19	4d10-16d10	2d6	2d6	2d4	1d6
Gargantuan	32-33	6-7	22-23	16d10-32d10	2d8	2d8	2d6	1d8
Colossal	36-37	4-5	26-27	32d10+	4d6	4d6	2d8	2d6

SAM WOOD

Outsider

Outsiders are nonelemental creatures that come from other dimensions, realities, or planes (a devil, for example). Unless they're neutral, outsiders have alignment-based subtypes (chaos, evil, good, lawful, or any compatible pair out of the four).

Hit Die.....d8
Attack Bonus.....As fighter
Good Saving Throws....Fortitude, Reflex, Will
Skill Points.....8/HD (Int modifier applies per HD)
Feats.....1 + 1/4HD
Notes.....See the *Monster Manual* for outsider special abilities.

Size	Str	Dex	Con	Hit Dice	Slam Damage	Bite Damage	Claw Damage	Gore Damage
Fine	4-5	18-19	10-11	1/16 d8-1/8 d8	1	1	—	—
Diminutive	6-7	16-17	10-11	1/8 d8-1/4 d8	1d2	1d2	1	—
Tiny	8-9	14-15	10-11	1/4 d8-1/2 d8	1d3	1d3	1d2	1
Small	10-11	12-13	10-11	1/2 d8-1d8	1d4	1d4	1d3	1d2
Medium-size	12-13	10-11	12-13	1d8-2d8	1d6	1d6	1d4	1d3
Large	20-21	10-11	16-17	2d8-4d8	1d8	1d8	1d6	1d4
Huge	28-29	8-9	20-21	4d8-16d8	2d6	2d6	2d4	1d6
Gargantuan	32-33	6-7	24-25	16d8-32d8	2d8	2d8	2d6	1d8
Colossal	36-37	4-5	28-29	32d8+	4d6	4d6	2d8	2d6

MATT MITCHELL

Plant

This type comprises vegetable creatures (a shambling mound, for example).

Hit Die.....d8
Attack Bonus.....As cleric
Good Saving Throws....Fortitude
Skill Points.....None
Feats.....None
Notes.....Plants are immune to poison, *sleep*, paralysis, stunning, and *polymorphing*. They are not subject to critical hits or mind-influencing effects (*charms*, compulsions, phantasms, patterns, and morale effects). Plants either have low-light vision or are blind and have the blindsight special quality.

Size	Str	Dex	Con	Hit Dice	Slam Damage	Bite Damage	Claw Damage	Gore Damage
Fine	4-5	18-19	10-11	1/16 d10-1/8 d10	1	—	—	1
Diminutive	6-7	16-17	10-11	1/8 d10-1/4 d10	1d2	—	1	1d2
Tiny	8-9	14-15	10-11	1/4 d10-1/2 d10	1d3	1	1d2	1d3
Small	10-11	12-13	10-11	1/2 d10-1d10	1d4	1d2	1d3	1d4
Medium-size	12-13	10-11	12-13	1d10-2d10	1d6	1d3	1d4	1d6
Large	20-21	10-11	16-17	2d10-4d10	1d8	1d4	1d6	1d8
Huge	28-29	8-9	20-21	4d10-16d10	2d6	1d6	2d4	2d6
Gargantuan	32-33	6-7	24-25	16d10-32d10	2d8	1d8	2d6	2d8
Colossal	36-37	4-5	28-29	32d10+	4d6	2d6	2d8	4d6

Any Land. Don't use just the word "Any" unless the creature literally can be found anywhere from the depths of the sea to the top of the highest mountain.

CLIMATE TYPES

Cold: Arctic and subarctic climes. Any area that has winter conditions for the greater portion of the year is cold.
Temperate: Any area that has alternating warm and cold seasons.
Warm: Tropical and subtropical climes. Any area that has summer conditions for the greater portion of the year is warm.

TERRAIN TYPES

Aquatic: Fresh or salt water.
Desert: Any dry area with sparse vegetation.
Plains: Any fairly flat area that is not a desert, marsh, or forest.
Forest: Any area covered with trees.
Hill: Any area with rugged, but not mountainous, terrain.
Mountains: Rugged terrain, higher than hills.
Marsh: Low, flat, waterlogged areas.
Underground: Subterranean area (unlike the other terrain types, this does not require a climate listing).

Do not create new climate or terrain types.

ORGANIZATION

Use a descriptive term for the kinds of groups the creature might form (there can be more than one). Include a parenthetical note that says how many creatures are in each type of group. The note should be a number, not a dice range, but it is helpful if the range you give can be generated easily with one die. For example, 1-4 (1d4), or 3-10 (1d8+2).

Some suggestions for terms and numbers can be found on the **Organization Examples** chart.

CHALLENGE RATING

This shows the party level for which the creature would make a good encounter of moderate difficulty. You should assume that the party is composed of four fresh characters (full hit points, full spells, and an assortment of equipment appropriate to their levels). Given reasonable luck, the four characters should be able to win the encounter with some damage, but no casualties.

There is no tried and true way to assign challenge ratings. The best

method is to page through the *Monster Manual* until you find a comparable creature. The **Challenge Rating Guestimator** table will help you estimate the creature's challenge rating, but you'll need to both check the *Monster Manual* and playtest the creature against a few sample parties to arrive at an appropriate challenge rating.

TREASURE

Most creatures will have no treasure (None) or Standard treasure. Very intelligent creatures might have double or triple treasure. Some creatures might collect only certain types of treasure. See the Introduction to the *Monster Manual* for details.

ALIGNMENT

List the alignment that the majority of creatures of this type have. Use two terms: lawful, neutral, or chaotic followed by good, neutral, or evil. You don't have to write neutral neutral or true neutral—just neutral will do fine. All alignments have a qualifier: Always, Usually, or Often, as noted in the introduction to the *Monster Manual*.

ADVANCEMENT RANGE

This is a measure of how tough the creature can get if the DM decides to pump it up. In general, a creature should be able to gain up to three times its original Hit Dice (that is, a 4 Hit Die creature should be able to go up to 12 HD. Most creatures will get larger if the DM adds a lot of Hit Dice. For example, the advancement range entry for a Large creature with 4 Hit Dice might read: 5 to 8 HD (Large); 9 to 12 HD (Huge). See the types section for guidelines on size and Hit Dice.

THE MONSTER'S DESCRIPTION

Your monster design is not complete without some text about what the creature is like.

FIRST PARAGRAPH: This is a short description of what the monster is all about (in other words, a more lengthy version of your basic concept). This should not exceed 30 words, no matter how long the monster entry is. Consider this paragraph a sales pitch for why the DM should include the monster in an adventure.

SUBSEQUENT PARAGRAPHS: Two or three paragraphs that briefly describe what the creature looks like, what it eats, how it acts when it's not fighting, and any other interesting tidbits you can dream up.

This section should say how big the creature really is (height or length in feet, weight in pounds) and what languages it can speak.

COMBAT SECTION: Begins with a brief description of how the monster fights. It should include notes about the creature's favorite tactics.

SPECIAL ATTACKS SECTION: These explain everything listed in the Special Attacks line in the statistics block. Always list the special attacks in the same order as they appear in the statistics block.

Special attacks are extraordinary (Ex), spell-like (Sp), or supernatural (Su). (See Special Abilities in Chapter 10 of the *Player's Handbook*.)

Extraordinary: Extraordinary abilities are nonmagical, don't go away in an antimagic field, and are not subject to

Shapechanger

SAM WOOD

These are nonamorphous creatures that can assume other forms (a doppelganger, for example).

Hit Die.....d8
Attack Bonus.....As cleric
Good Saving Throws.....Fortitude, Reflex, Will
Skill Points.....2 x Int score (+1/extra level)
Feats.....1 + Int modifier (+1/4 extra Hit Dice)
Notes.....Shapechangers have darkvision with a range of 60 feet.

Size	Str	Dex	Con	Hit Dice	Slam Damage	Bite Damage	Claw Damage	Gore Damage
Fine	4-5	18-19	10-11	1/16 d8-1/8 d8	1	1	—	—
Diminutive	6-7	16-17	10-11	1/8 d8-1/4 d8	1d2	1d2	1	—
Tiny	8-9	14-15	10-11	1/4 d8-1/2 d8	1d3	1d3	1d2	1
Small	10-11	12-13	10-11	1/2 d8-1d8	1d4	1d4	1d3	1d2
Medium-size	12-13	10-11	12-13	1d8-2d8	1d6	1d6	1d4	1d3
Large	20-21	10-11	16-17	2d8-4d8	1d8	1d8	1d6	1d4
Huge	28-29	8-9	20-21	4d8-16d8	2d6	2d6	2d4	1d6
Gargantuan	32-33	6-7	24-25	16d8-32d8	2d8	2d8	2d6	1d8
Colossal	36-37	4-5	28-29	32d8+	4d6	4d6	2d8	2d6

FACE/REACH BY SIZE

Size	Example Creature	Face[1]	Natural Reach
Fine	Housefly	1/2 ft.	0
Diminutive	Toad	1 ft.	0
Tiny	Giant rat	2-1/2 ft.	0
Small	Halfling	5 ft.	5 ft.
Medium-size	Human	5 ft.	5 ft.
Large (tall)[2]	Ogre	5 ft.	10 ft.
Large (long)[3]	Horse	5 ft. by 10 ft.	5 ft.
Huge (tall)[2]	Hill giant	10 ft. by 5 ft.	15 ft.
Huge (long)[3]	Bulette	10 ft. by 20 ft.	10 ft.
	Retriever	15 ft. by 15 ft.	10 ft.
Gargantuan (tall)[2]	50-foot animated statue	20 ft. by 20 ft.	20 ft.
Gargantuan (long)[3]	Kraken	20 ft. by 40 ft.	10 ft. (bite)
	Purple worm	30 ft. by 30 ft. (coiled)	15 ft.
Colossal (tall)[2]	The tarrasque	40 ft. by 40 ft.	25 ft.
Colossal (long)[3]	Great red wyrm	40 ft. by 80 ft.	15 ft.

1 Listed width by length.
2 Tall creatures are those that are taller than they are long or wide. Long creatures are as long or longer, or as wide or wider, than they are tall.
3 Long creatures can be in any of several shapes. A Huge spider fills a 10-foot-square area, but a Huge snake fills a space 20 feet long and 5 feet wide (unless it coils itself into a circle, in which case it would take up a 10-foot by 10-foot space).

anything that disrupts magic. Using an extraordinary attack is a free action unless noted otherwise.

Spell-Like: Spell-like abilities are magical and work just like spells (though they are not spells and so have no verbal, somatic, material, focus, or XP components). They go away in an antimagic field and are subject to spell resistance.

Spell-like abilities usually have a limit on the number of times they can be used. A spell-like ability that can be used "at will" has no such limit. Using a spell-like ability is a standard action unless noted otherwise, and doing so while threatened provokes an attack of opportunity. A spell-like ability can be disrupted just as a spell can.

Supernatural: Supernatural abilities are magical and go away in an antimagic field but are not subject to spell resistance. Using a supernatural ability is a standard action unless noted otherwise. Supernatural abilities might have a use limit or be usable at will, just like spell-like abilities. However, using supernatural abilities does not provoke attacks of opportunity and never requires Concentration checks.

The most common special attacks are briefly described in the Introduction to the *Monster Manual*.

Saving Throws For Special Attacks: Each special attack section should include the type of saving throw the attack allows (if any) and the DC of the save. Determine the saving throw type as follows:

- Fortitude saving throws apply to attacks on the defender's vitality such as poison, magic that causes instant death, level draining, or magic that causes physical transformation.

- Reflex saving throws apply to massive attacks such as a wizard's *fireball* or a damage-inflicting breath weapon.

- Will saving throws apply to mental influence and domination as well as any magical effect that doesn't fall into the previous two categories.

WAYNE REYNOLDS

Undead

Undead are once-living creatures animated by spiritual or supernatural forces (a zombie, for example).

Hit Die.....d12
Attack Bonus.....As wizard
Good Saving Throws.....Will
Skill Points.....3 × Int score (+2/extra level)
Feats.....1 + Int modifier (1/4 extra levels)
Notes.....Undead are immune to poison, *sleep*, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and necromantic effects, and they ignore mind-influencing effects (*charms*, compulsions, phantasms, patterns, and morale effects). Undead are not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, ability drain, or energy drain. They have no Constitution scores and are therefore immune to anything requiring a Fortitude saving throw (unless it affects objects). Undead spellcasters use their Charisma modifier when making Concentration checks.

Undead creatures are not at risk of death from massive damage, but when reduced to 0 hit points or less, they are immediately destroyed. Most undead have darkvision with a range of 60 feet.

Undead cannot be *raised*. *Resurrection* can affect them, but since undead creatures are usually unwilling to return to life, these attempts typically fail. (See Bringing Back the Dead in Chapter 10 in the *Player's Handbook*).

Size	Str	Dex	Con	Hit Dice	Slam Damage	Bite Damage	Claw Damage	Gore Damage
Fine	4-5	18-19	–	1/16 d8-1/8 d8	1	1	–	–
Diminutive	6-7	16-17	–	1/8 d8-1/4 d8	1d2	1d2	1	–
Tiny	8-9	14-15	–	1/4 d8-1/2 d8	1d3	1d3	1d2	1
Small	10-11	12-13	–	1/2 d8-1d8	1d4	1d4	1d3	1d2
Medium-size	12-13	10-11	–	1d8-2d8	1d6	1d6	1d4	1d3
Large	20-21	10-11	–	2d8-4d8	1d8	1d8	1d6	1d4
Huge	28-29	8-9	–	4d8-16d8	2d6	2d6	2d4	1d6
Gargantuan	32-33	6-7	–	16d8-32d8	2d8	2d8	2d6	1d8
Colossal	36-37	4-5	–	32d8+	4d6	4d6	2d8	2d6

CHALLENGE RATING GUESSTIMATOR

Effective Hit Dice*	Challenge Rating
Less than 3	1/2
3-6	1
6-8	2
8-10	3
10-13	4
13 -16	5
16-19	6
19-22	7
22-25	8
25-28	9
28-31	10
31-34	11
34-37	12
37-35	13
35-38	14
38-41	15
41-44	16
44-47	17
47-50	18
50-53	19
53-56	20
57 or more	21st or higher

*Divide its average hit points by 4.5 to calculate the creature's basic Hit Dice, then add 1 or 2 for each special attack or useful special quality the creature has.

CALCULATING SAVING THROW DCS: The formula for most save DCs is 10 + ½ extra Hit Dice of the creature + the relevant Ability Score Modifier from the creature using the attack. (For a spell-like ability, the formula is 10 + the spell level + the creature's Charisma modifier.) The relevant stats are:

Strength: Any application of force, crushing, binding, or constriction.

Dexterity: Movement, movement restrictions, hitting with a missile, entanglement, or webs.

Constitution: Almost anything that comes from the creature's body: poison, breath weapons.

Intelligence: Illusion effects.

Wisdom: Mental or perception effects except *charms* and compulsions; see Charisma.

Charisma: Anything pitting the creature's will against an opponent: gaze attacks, *charms,* compulsions, energy drain. Also use Charisma for any DC that normally would be based on an ability score the creature does not have. For example, undead creatures have no Constitution scores, so any poison attacks they have would use Charisma to determine DC.

Other Notes On Special Attacks: If an attack involves an element or form of energy, state which form it is: Fire (heat, flame); Cold (ice, frost); Electricity (lightning, electrical current); Force (like *magic missile* or *wall of force*); Acid (any caustic substance); or Sonic (sound, ultrasound, subsonic).

SPECIAL QUALITIES

These are handled just like special attacks. Common special qualities are described in the introduction to the *Monster Manual.*

SKILLS

Use this section to list a racial bonus or conditional bonus the creature has for skill checks. Drop the section if the creature has no special modifiers to skills.

FEATS

Like the skills section, this is an optional section used to explain anything special about the creature's feats.

CHARACTERS

This is an optional section. If the creature tends to become a member of a character class, talk about that here. Include the creature's favored multiclass. (See Multiclass Characters in Chapter 3 of the *Player's Handbook.*) If the creature is prone to worship a certain deity, list the domains of cleric spells the deity provides.

SOCIETY

This optional section describes in detail how the creature lives and functions in the world.

ORGANIZATION EXAMPLES

2	2-5	5-20	20-40	40-60	61+
Brace	Bevy	Colony	Band	Battalion	Army
Pair	Brood	Nest	Drove	Cabal	Nation
	Bunch	Ride	Flight	Clan	Tribe
	Cluster	Knot	Flotilla	Flock	
	Company	Pack	Herd	Horde	
	Covey	Pod	Mob	Host	
	Crew	Pride	Platoon	Plague	
	Family	Squad	School	Shoal	
	Gang	Swarm	Troop		
	String	Patrol			
	Team				

That wraps up our monster recipe. Remember that you can move through these sections in just about any order you choose (as long as you started out with a good, solid monster concept). You'll probably want to choose a size, type, and number of Hit Dice for your monster before doing anything else. Once you've done that, assign the creature's ability scores and generate hit points, Armor Class, skills, feats, and saving throws. Flesh out the rest in any order you like. D

Vermin

This type includes insects, arachnids, arthropods, worms, and similar invertebrates (a monstrous spider, for example).

Hit Die.....d8
Attack Bonus.....As cleric
Good Saving Throws.....Fortitude
Skill Points.....10+Int
Feats.....None
Notes.....Vermin have no Intelligence scores and are immune to all mind-influencing effects (*charms*, compulsions, phantasms, patterns and morale effects). Unless noted otherwise, vermin have darkvision with a range of 60 feet. Poisonous vermin of at least Medium-size get a bonus to the DCs for their poisons based on their size, as shown below.

Vermin Size	Poison DC Bonus
Medium-size	+2
Large	+4
Huge	+6
Gargantuan	+8
Colossal	+10

Size	Str	Dex	Con	Hit Dice	Slam Damage	Bite Damage	Claw Damage	Gore Damage
Fine	1	12-13	10-11	1/16 d8-1/8 d8	—	1	—	1
Diminutive	1	12-13	10-11	1/8d8-1/4 d8	—	1d2	1	1d2
Tiny	2-3	10-11	10-11	1/4 d8-1/2 d8	1	1d3	1d2	1d3
Small	6-7	10-11	10-11	1/2 d8-1d8	1d2	1d4	1d3	1d4
Medium-size	10-11	10-11	10-11	1d8-2d8	1d3	1d6	1d4	1d6
Large	18-19	8-9	14-15	2d8-4d8	1d4	1d8	1d6	1d8
Huge	26-27	8-9	18-19	4d8-16d8	1d6	2d6	2d4	2d6
Gargantuan	34-35	6-7	22-23	16d8-32d8	1d8	2d8	2d6	2d8
Colossal	42-43	6-7	26-27	32d8+	2d6	4d6	2d8	4d6

HE'S LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD DRACONIANS.

KANG'S COMMAND

BY DON PERRIN & MARGARET WEIS

ILLUSTRATED BY ASHLEY WOOD

The big bozak draconian had traveled far that day. The sun had set long ago. The two moons, one red and one silver, had played a game of tag with the clouds in the night sky. Now the game was over and the clouds had won. The bozak could see in the darkness, see the warmth that living things radiated, but rocks aren't warm and he'd just stubbed his big toe on a large one. Most landmarks—such as mountains—aren't warm either, and he could no longer tell whether he was headed in the right direction. He began to look for a place to rest his sore feet and weary body.

Having figured that the best he could possibly find would be some moldy old cave, he was pleased beyond measure to stumble across a structure with four walls and a roof. No lights shone from the windows. No smoke rose from the chimney. No dog came dashing out, barking frantically. The yard was overgrown with weeds. The bozak—his name was Kang—concluded that the house was abandoned.

The time was early summer. The War of the Lance would begin later that year in the autumn months, but for now the world was at peace, or so it was thought. Kang knew better. The armies of the Dark Queen had been formed and were now moving slowly and stealthily into position, to be ready to strike when Her Dark Majesty gave the order. Draconians were as yet unknown to most of the world's inhabitants and they had orders to keep it that way. Any human, elf, dwarf, or kender who stumbled upon them was immediately and permanently silenced.

No one needed his throat cut this night. Kang found the house abandoned, as he had expected. A couple of rotting human corpses lay across the door stoop, each body with enough goblin arrows sticking out the back that they might have been mistaken for porcupines. Kang kicked the bodies away from the door and entered the house.

The place stank of goblin. Snout wrinkling in disgust—the draconian had little use for his allies—Kang crept through an outer room littered with broken furniture and goblin refuse. In a back room, he found what he was searching for—a bed. He counted himself fortunate that the fool gobbos hadn't decided to break the frame up for kindling.

Kang stretched himself out. The bed was short for his immense height. His feet and most of his lower legs hung over the end, but it beat sleeping on the ground. And it really beat wondering whether his slumbers would be interrupted by a cave's original dweller, as had happened to him two nights earlier when an irate bugbear had taken exception to Kang's presence in her lair.

KANG HAD FOUGHT. HE'D FOUGHT WELL, AND HE'D BEEN REWARDED. HE WAS ALIVE.

Ordinarily Kang would have prayed to the Dark Queen before he slept, asked her to grant him the magic that was her gift to bozak draconians. But tonight he was just too damn tired. Muttering an apology to Her Dark Majesty, he removed the battleaxe from its harness and placed it on the floor near his hand. He closed his eyes, sneezed, cursed goblins for being filthy little bastards, and was fast asleep.

"DAMN, SLITH! This places stinks to the Abyss and back!"

"Quit belly-aching, Gloth. You, too, Fulkth. We're not going to set up housekeeping in this dump."

"Then why are we here?"

"Yeah, Slith, what's going on? I was on watch last night. I want to get some sleep."

"Just shut up, the lot of you. I know for a fact you slept on watch, Dremon, so stop whining. I needed someplace we could talk without interruption from some busybody officer."

"Something up, Slith?"

"Yeah, what's up, Slith?"

"If you'll shut your snouts for a minute, I'll tell you!"

Kang was dreaming of the hatching room. The dreams were not pleasant ones. Draconians were bred from the eggs of metallic dragons, eggs that had been stolen, the young inside destroyed by evil magic, changed into the likes of Kang. When the baby draconians were hatched, hundreds from a single egg, they had been placed in a cavernous room with others of their kind, forced to fight over hunks of raw meat, forced to fight to survive. Kang had fought. He'd fought well, and he'd been rewarded. He was alive.

Kang opened one eye. He realized now that his dream of being locked inside a room with other draconians had been more reality than dream. The draconians he was hearing weren't with him back in that blood-slimed hatching room. They were only a few yards from where he lay. When he figured that out, he remembered where he was—in an abandoned house, a house that was apparently not as abandoned as he'd previously thought.

Kang held perfectly still. The memories of the hatching room were vivid. Those were fellow draconians out there, but that didn't mean that they would be overjoyed to see a brother. He cursed himself for having neglected his prayers. He should have known his vengeful Queen wouldn't let him get away with dereliction of duty. He continued to listen, all the while slowly moving his hand to grasp the handle of the battleaxe.

"First things first, though," the draconian called Slith was saying. "We break out the jug." A pause, then, in a tone of exasperation, "All right, Gloth, what's the matter? You brought the damn jug, didn't you?"

"Yeah, Slith, it's right here."

"Slith," Kang repeated the name. He was now wide awake. *Slith, is it? I was on my way to meet a draconian called Slith. Looks like I found him sooner than I expected.*

"You numbskull!" Slith was saying. "It's empty! What happened? You forget to put the cork in?"

"No, Slith, I remembered the cork this time. It's just ... it was a long walk and I was thirsty. I only took a taste. Or, at least, that's all I meant to ..."

"You drank my dwarf spirits," said Slith accusingly. "All my dwarf spirits! That was the last of the batch!"

"I'm sorry, Slith, I—"

The sentence ended in a yelp and the sound of a crockery jug being smashed to bits, presumably over someone's head.

Kang found it hard to blame Slith. Kang's own mouth watered at the very mention of the dwarven drink. A strong liquor made from fermented mushrooms, dwarf spirits came by their name because dwarves are the only race who know the secret to the distillation process. Draconians were addicted to the intoxicating brew and would go to great lengths to obtain it.

After some further muttering, Slith carried on. "All right, boys, here's the deal. You remember that miserable dwarf we captured the other day? The day poor Captain James met with his unfortunate accident?"

There were sounds of snickers and grunting chuckles.

"They're still trying to figure out how he took an arrow in the back when he was facing the enemy," said one.

"That was a nice shot, Fulkth. Right through his skull."

"Too high. I was aiming for his heart."

"Hey, Slith, I hear they're sending out a new commander to take charge of our company. Some real tough bastard."

"Yeah, Slith, I heard the same thing—"

"What of it?" Slith grunted. "He gives us any grief, we'll settle him the same as the others. Now shut up and pay attention. We don't have much time. We have to be back before the end of watch or we'll be missed. Now, as I was saying, I had a little talk with that dwarf prisoner."

"So did half the officers in camp. What good's that gonna do us, Slith?"

"If you'd quit flapping your fangs for half a second, maybe you'll find out!" Slith retorted irritably. "As for the officers, all they want is information about the enemy. What in the Abyss do we care about that? I sneaked into the prison one night, and me and the dwarf had a nice friendly chat. I promised the little creep I'd spring him if he told me something worth the price of his life. And none of that 'how many dwarves in the Thorbardin army' junk. Here's what he said ..."

Kang heard scraping of clawed feet and tails on the floor, as though the group of draconians were all bunching in together. Slith lowered his voice. Kang had to strain to hear.

"There's this old dwarven stronghold not far from our position. Dates back to the Cataclysm. According to this dwarf, it's filled from floor to ceiling with treasure."

There came gloating laughter and sounds of scales clicking as if the draconians were all nudging each other.

"Who's guarding this treasure?" asked one.

"Dwarves," said Slith.

"Dwarves? How many dwarves?"

"Relax, will you?" Slith was disgusted. "Not *live* dwarves. The guardians are all dead."

"Dead dwarves guarding the treasure?" Gloth gulped. "How do you kill a dead dwarf? They're already dead."

"Obviously," Slith said dryly.

"Well, how do you then?"

"There are ways," Slith said, but he didn't go into detail. "Look, don't start worrying about dead dwarves. We'll be lucky if we make it that far. There's a bigger problem. The stronghold's surrounded by a moat. Not just any ordinary moat, either. It's sixty feet across and the Dark Queen only knows how deep. I know. I went to take a look at it."

"You found it? You found the stronghold?"

"I found it. Right where the dwarf said it was, too. There used to be a bridge across the moat, with a drawbridge at

the end. The bridge is gone now, rotted away. All that's left of it are some posts sticking up out of the water."

"Interesting," Kang murmured to himself.

"We could swim." That suggestion came from Gloth.

"And what do we do with the treasure, you numbskull? Carry it in our teeth on the way back?"

"Oh. I didn't think about that."

Kang could almost hear Slith rolling his eyes.

"Gloth, you're an idiot."

"I know," Gloth sounded contrite.

"Not to mention the fact that the water is black and slimy, and there are things living in it."

"What sort of things?" Fulkth demanded.

"I dunno," Slith returned. "All I know is that when I tossed a hunk of meat into the water, the water started to boil, and the meat was gone like *that!*"

Slith snapped his teeth together. The sound was impressive. Even Kang jumped.

"Well, this is just great," Dremon grumbled. "You've found us a treasure we can't get close to. Good work, Slith."

"We'll get the treasure," Slith said. "I just haven't figured out how yet. I was thinking maybe a boat—"

"Not a boat," Kang said in a loud voice from the back room. "Boats take a long time to build, and they can tip over or sink. Plus those fish you described are fang-fish, and they can jump into a boat and strip the flesh from your bones in no time. What you need is a—"

The draconians were on him before he finished his last sentence. A large baaz brandishing a curved bladed sword burst through the doorway, followed by a sivak and two more baaz.

Kang sat calmly on the bed, his arms resting on his knees, his hands empty. He could grab the battleaxe in one swift move, but he hoped it wouldn't be necessary. He looked up mildly at the draconians who stood glaring down at him.

"Who in the Abyss are you?" the sivak demanded.

Kang recognized the voice. This was the one called Slith. He wore the rank of file leader.

"Someone who can get you across that moat," Kang replied.

Slith grunted.

"He's a damn spy. He looks like an officer to me. Let's off him," said a draconian. Kang recognized Gloth's voice.

"You kill me," Kang said, "and you can kiss that treasure goodbye. I know about those fang-fish. The dwarves raise 'em in that nasty Thorbardin hole of theirs. These fish are trained to strip flesh from bone in less time than it takes to scream. They work so fast that you're still alive after they've finished. When you look down at yourself you see nothing but bones and bloody water. 'Course, you don't live very long after that. You wouldn't really want to."

"Not if I had to go around in nothing but my bones," said Gloth, shocked. "It wouldn't be decent."

"Gloth," said Slith. "You're an idiot."

"Yes, sir," said Gloth humbly.

"So shut up."

"Yes, sir."

"How do you know so much?" Slith asked, glowering at Kang. "You been to this dwarf stronghold?"

"Nope. Never seen it or heard of it before tonight. I'm trained to know about such things," Kang replied. "About moats and how to cross them, and how to cross lakes and rivers and chasms and gorges. I'm trained in building bridges and siege weapons. But my specialty is bridge-building."

"I think your specialty is lying," said one. "The Dragon Highlords train humans to do that sort of work. They don't train the likes of us."

"I think you're right, Fulkth," said Slith, eyeing Kang. "I think you're stringing us along so we don't cut your throat. Why should we believe you?"

"You might have a more difficult time cutting my throat than you imagine," Kang said with a smile. "I'm pretty good with this axe, but I'm better with my magic."

The draconians exchanged sidelong glances. Neither baaz nor sivaks have the ability to use magic. Bozaks did, and Kang was counting on the fact that most draconians had a healthy respect for bozak magic. What these draconians didn't know was that Kang was bluffing. He hadn't prayed to his Queen, so she had not granted him his magic.

"As to believing me," Kang continued. "I'll tell you my story, and then you decide. I've been serving in Sanction under Lord Ariakas. One night during a drinking bout, he made the claim that his draconians were smarter than human soldiers. Another officer said we weren't, called us a bunch of dumb lizards. Ariakas bet this officer that we could learn anything humans could learn. The officer picked one of us at random: me. They sent me to a place where they teach soldiers how to build bridges and siege engines and such like."

"You learned all that?" Slith was still skeptical.

"You bet I did," said Kang. "I was good at it. Really good. Too good, in fact. I made the humans look stupid."

"What happened? Why aren't you still there?"

"I kept getting into fights with the humans. The last fight, I killed one. It was self-defense, but humans don't see it that way when our kind is involved. I figured it was only a matter of time before they arrested me for murder, so I left."

"In other words, you're a deserter," Slith said.

Kang shrugged. "Let's just say I didn't tell anyone I was leaving."

"Uh, huh. All right, smart boy—"

"Name's Kang."

"All right, smart boy, how do we get across this moat in one night? Just us—our company. We don't want the whole damn army involved."

"You got rope?" Kang asked.

"Yeah."

"Lots of rope?"

"We can get it."

"Good."

"What else? Wood? Nails? Hammers?"

"Just rope. That's all you need," Kang said.

"So what do we do with the rope?" Fulkth asked.

"Tie it around your tail and hang yourself upside down from the nearest tree," Kang growled.

"That does it!" Fulkth said angrily. He raised his sword, made a jump at Kang.

Kang leapt from the bed. He stiff-armed Fulkth with his left hand, catching him in the throat, and elbowed Gloth in the gut with his right. Whipping his tail, Kang swept the other draconian's feet out from under him. Snatching up his battleaxe, Kang faced Slith.

"You want in on this, too?" Kang demanded, glowering.

"Not now," Slith said, raising his hands. "Maybe later. I'll leave my options open. Can you really build a bridge across this moat with nothing but rope?"

"I can," said Kang. "But I'll be damned if I explain it to you now. What's to stop you from killing me and trying it

yourselves? I'll build you that bridge for a one-fifth share of the treasure."

"Hah!" Slith chuckled. "Let's say you'll build a bridge for a one-fifth share of us not telling the humans where to find a deserter. We'll give you one-twentieth a share."

Kang snarled and grumbled and argued for as long as he figured looked good. When it became apparent that Slith was starting to grow seriously annoyed, Kang gave in.

"I'll do it," he muttered with no very good grace. "But I'm in command when it comes to the bridge. What I say goes. If not"—he added, seeing Slith scowl—"you'll end up fish food."

Slith saw that on this point Kang wasn't going to budge. The sivak shrugged. "Just while we're building the bridge. I'm back in command after that."

"It's a deal. When do we start?" Kang asked.

"Tomorrow," said Slith.

Kang was surprised. "You sure you can get away? Don't you have watch to stand? Go on patrol? Don't you have assigned duties?"

Slith waved a clawed hand. "Yeah, but who's going to make us do our 'duties,' and what are they going to do with us if we don't? We're the 'dracos,' the 'lizard-boys.' The humans don't give a damn what we do in camp. All they care about is that we're in the front ranks when the fighting starts."

"I understand," Kang said quietly.

"Glad you do." Slith shrugged. "We better be heading back to camp. It's almost dawn. Fulkth, you're in charge of finding rope. Lots of rope."

"By the way," Kang asked curiously, as the others turned to leave. "What happened to the dwarf? Did you save his life like you promised?"

"Are you kidding?" Slith said with a grin and a snap of his teeth. "You can't trust dwarves. He might tell someone else. I gutted the hairy little bastard."

SLITH PROVIDED KANG with a crude map—very crude—of the location of the dwarven stronghold. Fortunately, the sivak provided verbal instructions as well. If Kang had followed Slith's map, he might well have ended up in Mt. Nevermind. As it was, he floundered about in a dark and nasty swamp populated by enormous iron-claw trees for the better part of the morning. At length, just when he thought he was going to spend the rest of the war in the swamp and was wondering if the wily Slith had tricked him, Kang heard raucous laughter echoing across the dank and dismal water. He'd found the draconian company.

He headed their direction, moving stealthily. The draconians were making so much noise that he could have done a spring reel and they would have never heard him. Gliding up to stand behind a thick-boled iron claw tree, Kang watched the troop flap and flounder and curse their way through the swamp. They were supposed to be in some sort of line, but they were constantly breaking ranks, wandering off in pursuit of some wretched animal, stopping to try to catch fish, or shoving each other into the murky water.

The officers were as unruly as the men, although Kang noted that Slith kept trying to maintain some sort of discipline. He did this by roaming up and down the line, shouting and yelling commands that couldn't be heard over the tumult, enforcing those commands with thwacks to the heads of the offenders.

Kang crept along after them, watching the spectacle, not yet revealing himself. He had no fear that he would be spotted. No one was bothering to keep watch. The swamp grew deeper and darker. The thick foliage formed a canopy that shut out the sun. The air grew cooler, the dark water deeper, and the swamp creatures swimming in the water larger. The march soon lost its novelty. The laughter changed to grumbles and complaints, the shoving matches turned ugly. Two baaz threw down their lengths of coiled rope and began a slug-fest. Their companions joined in, and a brawl broke out in the middle of the swamp. Slith and Fulkth waded into the fray and ended the fight, but not before one draconian was missing a snoutful of teeth, the other had a bent wing, and two coils of rope were lost in the muck.

Kang crept up behind Gloth, who was engrossed in watching the brawl.

"Hullo," said Kang and rested his hand on the baaz's shoulder.

Gloth let out a shriek.

"A dead dwarf! A dead dwarf's after me!" He shouted and ran leaping through the swamp without once looking back.

Kang stared after him in head-scratching amazement.

Their quarrel forgotten, the other draconians turned to face this new foe. They surrounded Kang, brandishing their weapons and shouting threats, ready to cut his throat on the spot. Slith punched and elbowed his way through the crowd. He commanded everyone to put their weapons away, and a few actually obeyed.

"I see you didn't have any trouble finding us," Slith added, introducing Kang.

"A deaf gully dwarf wouldn't have any trouble finding you," Kang remarked. "And neither would the enemy."

"What of it?" Slith snarled. He was obviously in an ill-humor. "We can take care of ourselves. Right, men?"

The draconians gave a cheer, but it was half-hearted and sullen. They were sick of this swamp. They eyed Kang suspiciously and scowled when Slith explained that he was going to instruct them in the fine art of bridge-building.

Reminding them that there was a fortune to be won, Slith cajoled and pummeled the draconians into a ragged line. Fulkth was sent off to retrieve Gloth, who could still be heard howling in the distance. Kang fell in at the end of the line, and the draconians began to slog through the swamp.

They reached the dwarven stronghold by noon. The building was plain and serviceable, built in the shape of a square with four squat, thick towers at the corners. Arrow-slits—set at dwarf height—ringed the walls. There was one way in and one way out of the stronghold, and that was a large wooden double door that had long since rotted away. What was left lay on the ground in front of the entryway.

All that remained of the drawbridge were two sets of stanchions, set at one-third intervals across the moat. Not much use. Kang drew as near as he could get without actually setting foot in the murky water, which was boiling and bubbling in an ominous manner. The fang-fish smelled dinner. Glancing back at the troop, he sighed and shook his head.

Having reached the end of their journey, the draconians appeared to think they had done their work for the day. They plopped down on the bank. Some took naps. Others began to play at kender-teeth, a gambling game guaranteed to start another row.

"I'd like to talk to the men," Kang said.

"Go ahead," Slith said, waving his hand at the troops.

"Order them to form into ranks," Kang said.

Slith stared. "What for? You want to talk to them, talk."

Kang suppressed a sigh. "Men!" he began and after shouting a few more times, he managed to draw their attention. "There's a treasure waiting for us over there." Kang pointed to the stronghold. "That treasure's going to be ours, but first we have to cross this moat. I know it looks hopeless"—the draconians were muttering and shaking their heads—"but it can be done. You have to follow my directions and do exactly what I tell you. Is that understood?"

The draconians yawned and scratched at mites that had crawled under their scales. A few nodded. Most went back to their game.

"Very good," said Kang, thinking to himself that it was really very bad. "Now, divide into sections."

He repeated this several times. No one moved. Slith waded in and began kicking and smacking. Eventually the draconians shoved and fumbled their way into three groups of eight.

"At least they know what a section is," Kang commented, glad to find something positive.

Slith grunted, but said nothing. He probably thought Kang was being sarcastic.

At Kang's command, the draconians tossed the coils of rope they'd been carrying onto the soggy ground. No piece was the same length or even made of the same material as any other. He looked them over and chose the lightest, a long cord about as thick as his forefinger. Taking a three-pronged hook from his belt, Kang tied the hook to the end of the rope.

"Who has the strongest arms in this company?" Kang asked.

Slith pointed to a huge sivak, who stood nearly a full head above Kang, and Kang was a big draco.

"Granak there killed a Solamnic by bashing in his helmet and pinching off the human's head. Strong enough for you?"

Kang motioned for the big sivak to come forward.

"See that wall of the fortress, Granak? You're going to take this grapple and throw it so that the hook lands over the wall. I'll keep hold of this end of the rope."

Granak studied the wall for a moment, gauging the distance. When he threw, he heaved the hook so far that when the rope paid out, it almost took Kang's arm with it. The hook's arc made a nose-dive over the wall. Tugging gingerly, Kang slowly pulled on the rope until the hook caught on the wall. The hook held the rope tight.

"So that's your bridge, smart boy?" Slith asked. "Looks a little flimsy."

Kang shook his head. "It's only the beginning. We've got a lot more work to do. Gloth! Front and center."

Gloth looked startled. He glanced around, then pointed to himself.

"Yes, you," said Kang. "I have a job for you, Gloth."

"For me?" Gloth asked, amazed.

"For him?" Slith sneered. "Why Gloth?"

"This job requires someone with courage and brains," Kang said.

"Yeah, so why Gloth?" Slith repeated, winking at the other draconians, who laughed raucously.

Gloth grinned. He was used to their contempt and had even come to like the attention, probably because it was the only attention anyone ever paid to him.

Kang ignored the others. He fixed his eyes on Gloth.

"Soldier, I need someone on the opposite side of this moat. You see this rope? You're going to grab onto it with your hands and feet, then you're going to shinny along this rope until you reach the other side. Like this." Kang went through the motions as best he could. "Understand?"

Gloth looked at the rope. He looked at Kang, then back at the rope, and then he looked at the moat. Occasionally, a fang-fish would leap out of the water, teeth snapping at insects or birds. As they watched, one of the fang-fish actually brought down a low-flying crow. Gloth gulped.

"You can do it, Gloth," Kang said. "I have confidence in you."

Gloth's buddies were still laughing and snickering. Gloth cast them a defiant glance and straightened his shoulders.

"I'll go. But what do I do when I get to the other side?" Gloth asked. "There's dead dwarves over there."

"The only thing you have to worry about now is falling into the moat. Keep away from the fishies, and you'll be fine. As for dead dwarves, you don't see any, do you?"

Gloth peered across the moat. He could see nothing dead or alive. Reassured, he reached for the rope.

"Woah!" Kang cried. "Not so fast! You dracos there. Come over here and give him a hand."

The rest of the draconians in Gloth's section came over. Kang handed the end of the rope to Fulkth.

"It's your job to make sure the rope is taut enough to keep your buddy from hitting water. When Gloth gets across to the other side, lower him to the base of the curtain wall."

Kang turned his attention to the other sections. "Dremon, I need your group to cut stakes from that treeline over there. We'll need eight long spears, at least six inches in diameter."

The draconians stared at him.

"Get moving!" Slith ordered.

Dremon and the others continued to stand in place for a moment. Then, grousing about missing all the fun of seeing Gloth fall into the moat, they slogged off in the direction of the treeline, some hundred yards away. Kang thought wistfully of the soldiers of his former unit who would have dashed off the moment he gave the order. Kang came to the realization he didn't hear any action behind him. Turning, he found Gloth and the rest of his section staring at him.

"What do we do now?" Gloth asked. "Should I go?"

Kang began to grow angry. He was not angry at the draconians. He was angry at the human officers who treated them like dumb animals and were then contemptuous of them for behaving like dumb animals.

"I told you he was an idiot," Slith stated, casting Gloth and his cohorts a scathing glance. "They're all idiots."

"You keep telling them that long enough, and they'll believe it," Kang said.

Slith glared at Kang, who met and held the sivak's gaze until it was Slith who first lowered his eyes. Slith turned on his heel, tromped over to Gloth, and thrust his snout into Gloth's face.

"What in the lowest depths of the Abyss are you waiting for?" Slith yelled.

Kang sighed. "You men know what to do?"

They thought this over, then nodded.

"Very well," he said. "I trust you to carry on."

The draconians appeared startled, but they set to work. Fulkth pulled on the rope until it was taut. With a final gulping look at the snapping fish, Gloth took hold of the rope in his hands, swung up his feet so that they clamped over the rope and began to slither across. Kang could hear sounds of axes

chopping wood in another part of the forest. Granak and his section were carrying out their orders.

Kang selected the three thickest ropes and laid them out side-by-side. Keeping one eye on Gloth's progress, he began to braid the three together into one large rope.

Gloth was inching his way across the moat, his eyes on the fish-teeming water below. The fang-fish had caught sight of him and were leaping frantically, snapping at his twitching tail. The rope began to sag. Gloth dipped down.

"Hey, fellas!" he cried. One of the fish had very nearly caught hold of him. "Up! Up!"

"Pull, damn you!" Slith shouted.

Gloth's seven companions hauled back on the rope, straining to keep it above the level of the water. Gloth reached the two-thirds point, but now the rope arced up to the top of the curtain wall, which meant that Gloth was no longer going straight. He was having to propel himself up an incline that was growing ever steeper. The rope and the draconians both groaned under the strain.

Then came the terrible sound of metal grinding on rock. The hook came loose from the wall. The rope went slack. The hook slid down six inches then, at the last moment, caught on a rock ledge. Gloth lost his grip. His feet swung down from the rope, but he managed to hang on with his hands, but his tail flopped into the water. Several fang-fish jumped for it, sinking their teeth into the draconian's flesh. Gloth let out a yelp and lashed his tail about, trying to shake the fish loose. All of them lost their hold except a single, stubborn fang-fish, who clung to the tail relentlessly.

Gloth craned his neck, saw the fish flapping about on the end of his tail. "Ow! It's eating me alive! Help! Get it off me!"

"Hold him steady, men," Kang ordered. He ventured perilously close to the water's edge to yell at the panic-stricken draconian. "Gloth! Climb hand-over-hand up the rope!"

Gloth managed to do as he was told. Then his hand slipped. He clung to the rope with the other, dangling precariously. The seven holding the rope strained every muscle to keep Gloth out of the water.

Kang took a long look. Satisfied, he picked up the end of the rope, tied the end into a loop, and wrapped it around his wrist.

"All right, men. Let go of the rope," he ordered.

Slith strode up. "What the hell do you mean, 'drop the rope?' You want to dump him in the drink?"

"He'll be all right. Just drop the rope."

No one moved.

Gloth was clinging to the rope for dear life. "Help!" He moaned. "Help me, Slith!"

"Shut the hell up!" Slith yelled back. "We're working on it!" He glared at Kang. "You got him into this. If the fish get him, they get you next."

"The fish aren't going to get anyone," Kang said sternly. "I know what I'm doing. Drop the rope!"

He was never certain afterward if the draconians finally trusted that he did know what he was doing or if they simply couldn't hold on any longer. The front draconian let go his hold, and the others followed. Gloth dropped like a rock. Instinct saved him. The baaz's stubby wings beat frantically, and he managed to lurch sideways to make a safe landing on the far bank. Most of the rope lay in the water, but one end remained attached to the hook on the wall. Kang held the other end fast.

Gloth stood up and shook himself. Lifting the end of his tail, he pounded it into the ground until the fish let go, then kicked the fish back into the moat.

He shook his fist at the group on the bank. "You bastards dropped me!"

As one voice, they all yelled back, "Shut up!"

"You made it alive, didn't you?" Slith added.

Gloth looked surprised, then pleased with himself. "I did. I made it!"

Slith turned an accusing gaze on Kang. "You knew he'd flap his way over to the other side."

Kang nodded. "Baaz have crappy little wings, but they get the job done."

"Why didn't you just tell them that?" Slith demanded. "The boys would have dropped the damn rope then."

"When an officer gives an order, he expects it to be obeyed instantly," Kang explained. "He can't have his men stopping to demand to know why he's doing what he's doing."

Slith gave Kang a strange look.

Kang smiled innocently. "Let's build this bridge," he said.

Gloth entered the fortress, hopping over the rotted wooden doors. A minute later, he appeared on the curtain wall, holding the rope end with the hook, grinning and waving.

Kang grabbed another length of rope, tied one end of that rope to the end of the three ropes he'd braided, and then tied those to the rope that stretched across the moat.

"Pull the rope across!" Kang ordered.

Gloth pulled on the first rope that now had the second rope attached to it. That was the easy part. Kang added the braided rope. Heavy to begin with, the braided rope sagged into the water and grew heavier after it was wet. Gloth strained and heaved, but he kept at it. The rest of the draconians held onto their end. By mid afternoon, the braided rope stretched across the water. At Kang's instructions, Gloth tied the end to one of the crenellations on the curtain wall.

After an hour's work, Granak's group had pounded the stakes they'd cut into the bank, forming a solid piling. Kang had them attach the ropes to the pilings, instructing them on the proper technique. He was pleased to see that, once motivated, the draconians were quick learners and skilled with their hands. When the ropes were set, he took the last remaining long rope and sliced it into pieces, then tied the pieces together to form a harness.

"Gloth! Throw back the rope attached to the hook. Throw the hook across to me!" Kang ordered.

Gloth took the hook from the top of the ramparts, gave a heave. The weighted hook landed in the mud near Kang.

"Now, here's how we're going to cross," Kang explained to the draconians. "Climb into this harness, and Gloth will haul you across. When you get to the other side, we'll haul the harness back and do it again."

"That gets us across," Slith said, "but what about the treasure?"

"It might help if I knew what the treasure was," Kang said. "And how much there was. Are we talking about steel coins packed in iron strongboxes? Jewels in casks? What?"

Slith's eyes narrowed. "Nevermind that, smart boy. We didn't take you on to ask questions. Just finish your bridge."

Kang shrugged. "Have it your way. At least tell me whether the treasure will fit into that harness."

Slith studied the harness and gave a surly nod.

"Then that's how we get it across. That's why the rope's higher at the far end than it is here. The treasure will slide down the incline. As for the bridge, it's built."

Slith didn't appear impressed. "Maybe it will, and maybe it won't. We'll see when the time comes. The bridge is finished, and I'm taking charge again. You cross first."

Kang had expected as much. Climbing into the harness, he showed them how to slide their way along the ropes. Slith came along second to keep an eye on Kang.

"Good job, Gloth," Kang said, mounting the curtain wall.

"Thank you, sir," Gloth returned proudly.

Slith watched this, then latched hold of Kang's arm.

"Come over here a minute, smart boy," Slith ordered, dragging Kang off into a corner. "Answer me one question. Why'd you choose Gloth for this part of the job? He's the stupidest draco ever hatched."

"Does he look stupid now?" Kang asked.

Slith glanced over at Gloth. The baaz was performing well, handling his assigned task with skill and resolution.

"Well, you got lucky," Slith muttered, rubbing his snout.

"If the others start to respect Gloth, he'll have more respect for himself, and you'll have a better soldier. Plus," Kang added, "he was so frightened of the fish, you'll notice he's forgotten all about having to face undead dwarves."

"He'll remember soon enough," Slith stated ominously. "We all will. You included, smart boy."

In less than an hour, the draconian company was safely across the moat and inside the fortress.

"DAMN DWARVES," muttered Gloth. "Why aren't they taller?"

"Because then they wouldn't be dwarves," Dremon pointed out.

"What would they be?" Gloth wondered.

"Stupid, like you!" Slith hissed. "Keep quiet!"

The old stronghold had been built to accommodate dwarves, not humans or any other creature over five feet in height. Consequently, the draconians were forced to tromp through the corridors with their heads bowed and their backs hunched. The stronghold was well-built, typical of dwarves, so while they had to worry about hitting their heads on the low ceilings, they didn't have to worry about the stone ceilings coming down on their heads.

The dwarf prisoner had not been able to provide Slith with directions to the treasure room, but Slith deemed it logical that it would be in the most secure part of the building, below ground level.

Slith ordered his command to proceed silently, with the result that the draconians lowered their voices to a dull roar. When Dremon maintained that undead dwarves were nothing to worry about—they worshipped the Queen of Darkness, same as the draconians—Fulkth said that no, undead dwarves worshipped Reorx, who wasn't on anyone's side but his own, a fight broke out. Slith was as bad as any of his men. His constant shouted commands to "Shut up!" echoed throughout the stronghold. Kang figured gloomily that they no longer had to worry about dead dwarves. Every corpse in the place must be wide awake and ready for action.

Kang had to bite his tongue to keep from intervening. He made a mild suggestion to Slith that they split their forces, post a patrol at the entrance as a rear guard, and send out patrols to search for the dungeons with orders to report back to the main body. Slith snorted at the suggestion. He was going to keep everyone where he could see them.

Kang said nothing more. Slith was in command.

They tromped through the stronghold, searching for a way down to the dungeon level, bumbling into dead-end corridors, taking wrong turns, clanking and clattering, quarreling and complaining. At length, by accident, they discovered the stairs that led down into the lower part of the stronghold. After a shoving match to see who was going first, they sorted themselves out—Slith thwacked a few heads—and trooped single-file down the narrow spiral stairs. About halfway down, someone remembered that they ought to light some torches, which occasioned a halt to argue about who had been supposed to bring torches.

Eventually they came up with three torches, one of which was wet. By the feeble light of the remaining two, they continued to wind their way down the dark staircase.

Kang had finagled his way to the front of the line. He had begged forgiveness of Takhisis and asked for his spells, and his Dark Queen had been unusually gracious. While he was not certain how much good his magic would be against the undead, he thought he should at least be in the front where he might do some good. He was descending the stairs, trying to keep from stepping on Slith's tail and trying to keep his own tail out from under the feet of Fulkth, who was behind him, when Slith sucked in his breath and came to a halt so suddenly that Kang had to perform all sorts of gyrations to stop before he plowed into the sivak.

"Damnation," said Slith.

Kang, being taller, was able to see over the sivak's head. Damnation was right.

The narrow winding stairs led to a long, wide corridor carved out of the bedrock. Filling the corridor was an army of dwarves. Dead dwarves. Dwarves who had been dead so long that their flesh had rotted away. The draconians faced an army of skeletons, still wearing the armor in which they had died. The armor and weapons were rusted, but the swords were still sharp.

Kang had fought skeletal warriors before, and he had not enjoyed it. It was not dangerous but frustrating. If you managed to bash one of the skeletons until it broke apart, it would cease fighting only long enough to collect its various parts, put itself back together, and start the battle all over.

There were five hundred skeletons standing in ranks. To make matters worse, the draconian company, having been taken by surprise, was backed up in the spiral staircase. Already, the dracos at the end of the line were shouting questions, demanding to know why those in front had stopped.

At the sight of the draconians, the skeletal warriors began to advance, striking their swords on their shields. Kang looked into the empty eye sockets of one, saw the eternal darkness lit with a flame of the magical geas that compelled them to protect their treasure long after it would do them any good. Shuddering, Kang averted his gaze.

"I have a spell," he said quietly to Slith. "It will take out only a few of these creeps, but—"

"Bah! Don't bother," Slith said, with a smug glance at Kang. "I came prepared for something like this. Fulkth, front and center."

Fulkth shoved his way past Kang, who had his spell on his lips and his hand on his battleaxe. Kang watched dubiously as Slith removed a length of heavy iron chain he had wrapped around his torso. Handing one end of the chain to Fulkth, Slith took the other himself. Fulkth moved to the right-hand side of the corridor and Slith took the left.

"Go!" Slith shouted.

He and Fulkth stretched out the iron chain until it reached across the corridor, then they began to run, heading straight for the first rank of skeletons.

They misjudged the height of their opponents.

"Lower the damn chain!" Slith howled, when the chain whistled through thin air. "They're dwarves, you numbskull!"

"Right!" Fulkth gasped and lowered the chain.

Thowp, thowp, thowp. The iron chain cut through the ranks of undead, staving in ribcages, knocking off heads, cutting off legs, sending bones and teeth and bits of armor flying. Kang watched in profound admiration.

"Follow me, boys!" he yelled, forgetting he wasn't in command.

He dashed forward, swinging his battleaxe, bashing down those few the iron chain missed. The other draconians poured out of the staircase behind him. Together, they raced down the hall, stomping on bones, kicking them and stomping again on any that appeared to be trying to reform.

They reached the end of the corridor, ankle-deep in dwarf bones, breathing heavily from the exertion, but unharmed.

"Guess you're not the only one who's smart, smart boy," Slith said with a wide grin.

"I guess I'm not," Kang replied, adding sincerely, "That was brilliant."

"We better hurry," Slith said, brushing off the praise, though Kang could tell the sivak was pleased. "It'll take these bastards awhile to sort themselves out, but they'll do it eventually. Come on."

He led the way down the corridor. The presence of the skeletal guardians ensured that the draconians had found the treasure room. Sure enough, rounding a corner, they almost ran right into it.

Rotting wooden doors hung from rusted hinges. Slith shoved them open and called the torch bearers to come forward. By the flickering firelight, they could see an enormous room filled with treasure. Kang had never seen or imagined so much wealth. Coins spewed out of chests. Precious gems sparkled in the firelight. Weapons crusted with jewels hung on the walls. Kang could tell by the pricking of his thumbs that many of these objects were magical.

"This ... this is wonderful!" Kang breathed.

"Yeah, not bad," said Slith. With no more than a mildly curious glance, he waved his hand and continued down the corridor. "Come on, boys. This way!"

The other draconians circled around Kang, who stared after them.

"Where are you going?" Kang shouted and pointed frantically. "Here's the treasure!"

Gloth turned back and patted Kang on the shoulder.

"If you'll excuse my saying this, sir," said Gloth kindly. "You're not very bright, are you?"

"I'm not very bright?" Kang bristled. "You're leaving behind a fortune in there!"

"Let me explain, sir. Say we took all that treasure and worked our tails off hauling it back to camp. What do you think would happen to it? Would we get to keep it? Not on your life, sir. The human officers would take it. Every coin and jewel of it. And after they took it, they'd likely kill us, just to make sure we didn't cause trouble."

"We could leave, take it with us, go someplace no one would find us ..."

"That wouldn't work, sir," said Gloth. "First thing you know, someone would complain that he didn't get his fair share. We'd end up fighting, and we'd end up killing each other. Isn't that right, sir?"

"Yes," Kang admitted sadly. He should have known that himself. He'd seen it happen often enough. "But then why did we go to all this trouble?"

"For the *treasure*, sir," Gloth said. "The real treasure."

"Found it!" Slith hollered.

Kang continued down the corridor until he found the other draconians gathered together inside what appeared to be a cellar, gazing rapturously at a large stash of barrels. A pungent odor filled the air. Kang sniffed appreciably. He knew that smell. There was nothing like it on Krynn.

"Dwarf spirits!"

"Been aging for over a hundred years, I'd say." Slith said and licked his chops. "And there must be fifty barrels of the stuff down here. Now do you understand, smart boy?"

"Not quite," Kang said.

"We haul this lot back to camp and we sell it. There must be—how many dracos in our camp, Fulkth?"

"About five thousand," Fulkth replied.

"That's one steel per cup per draco," said Slith. "Add in the fact that no one ever drinks only one cup. The boys have been really thirsty lately—"

"Not to mention bored—" said Dremon.

"And that we just got paid—" said Fulkth.

Now Kang understood. "You'll be rich," he said.

"You bet we will." Slith gestured to the barrels. "All right, boys. Let's get this lot loaded up and out of here."

But before they could begin work, chunks of dirt and rock started to rain down on Kang. He looked up and was alarmed to see a pair of shining ivory mandibles digging through the ceiling. The mandibles were sharp, with serrated edges. A clawed hand poked down through the crack.

"Look out!" Kang yelled, and shoved Slith up against the wall, hurling himself after him just as the ceiling gave way.

A gigantic insect, some eight feet tall, dropped down amidst the rubble. It landed on two feet, then reared up to gaze at the draconians, who stared back.

The creature's four eyes caught and held Kang's. Every thought in his mind seemed suddenly to run about like a young draco chasing its own tail. The one thought that emerged from the chaos was: *Run!*

Kang acted on that thought immediately. He tumbled over another draconian who was staring intently at the wall. Two others were fighting each other. Kang shoved them out of his way and kept running. Glancing around, he saw Slith running beside him, fear in his eyes.

Kang and Slith dashed into the bone-strewn corridor, slowing when Kang heard a voice behind him shout, "Hey! What are you guys doing? It's just a big bug!"

Kang skidded to a stop. He blinked and looked at Slith. Slith blinked and looked at him. Both slowly turned around.

Gloth was the only draconian doing anything useful. While the others were hunched over sobbing or staring at the wall or konking each other over the head, Gloth aimed a blow at the creature with his sword.

With a savage blow of its clawed fist, the umber hulk sent Gloth flying across the corridor. The draconian crashed against the wall. He shook his head for a moment, then went back to the attack.

"THE HUMANS'LL NEVER NOTICE WE'VE GOT ONE EXTRA. THEY THINK WE ALL LOOK ALIKE."

"Did you hear that? Why'd we run? Like Gloth said, it's just a bug." Slith said.

"I'll tell you why we ran!" Kang said. "That's an umber hulk. If you look into its eyes, it confuses the hell out of you! That's what happened to us."

"Then why didn't the confusion happen to Gloth?" Slith demanded. He answered his own question. "Oh, I get it. He's already so confused, he wouldn't know the difference."

He drew his sword, started back down the hall.

"He's right, men!" Slith was yelling. "It's just a big bug!"

"Don't look in its eyes!" Kang added as he sprinted back toward the dwarf spirits.

By the time they reached Gloth, the umber hulk had knocked him to the floor. The bug's mandibles were closing around Gloth's neck. Slith grabbed the mandibles. Putting his foot on one, he tried to pry them apart. Kang swung his battleaxe and staved in the back of the bug's head.

The umber hulk roared and let go of Gloth. Kang tried to dislodge his axe, but it was firmly imbedded in the chitinous shell. The hulk turned toward Kang, who lowered his head, trying desperately to keep from looking into the eyes.

"Damn! These things are hard to kill!" Kang gasped.

The hulk lunged at him with its snapping iron claws. Kang tripped, went sprawling, falling on his back. He looked squarely into the bug's eyes.

The confusion struck him full-force. Kang could not, for for the life of him, figure out why all these other draconians were stabbing their swords into the armored hide of a big bug. Bug blood spurted everywhere, and just as suddenly as the confusion had gripped him, he could think again.

The umber hulk lay squished on the floor, smashed to pieces.

NOW THAT THEY HAD FOUND the true treasure and defeated the umber hulk, the draconians worked with a cooperation and discipline that Kang found impressive. A brief search turned up the route the dwarves had used to roll the barrels into the cellar. By this means, the draconians removed the barrels one by one from the stronghold, rolling them down to the moat. Loading each barrel into the harnesses, they hauled the barrels across the water. Once on the other side, the draconians hid them under a covering of tree branches and swamp grass.

"We'll come back for them with wagons." Slith gazed with satisfaction at the row of barrels.

"A good haul," said Kang.

"Yeah," said Slith, "I got to admit, we could have never done it without you, smart boy." He was silent a moment, then added, "You should join up with us. The humans'll never notice we've got one extra. They think we all look alike. What do you say? You'll get a share of the loot. And, who knows? Someday, a smart boy like you might even work your way up to being my second in command."

Kang laughed. "Thanks, but I better be on my way." He turned around, started to leave.

"Well, good luck." Slith held out his hand.

"Thank you," said Kang. Taking the sivak's hand, Kang gave it a hearty shake.

THE NEXT DAY, the barrels were safely stored in a cave near the army camp. Slith was in his tent, counting steel pieces and handing them to Gloth, who was stowing them in a strongbox. They were interrupted by a knock on the tent post.

"Hide the box!" Slith ordered.

Gloth promptly shoved it under the bed.

"Come in," Slith bawled ungraciously, when the box was safely concealed.

Two baaz draconians wearing chain armor and breastplates entered the tent. Their sashes showed them to be an officer's bodyguard, but their helmets had the crest of the Provost-Martial corps. They cast quick, professional glances around the tent, while Slith and Gloth watched uneasily.

"Maybe they found out the truth about Captain James—" Gloth said in a loud whisper.

Slith kicked him.

One of the guards turned and spoke to someone outside the tent.

"The sivak and a baaz, sir."

A bozak draconian entered the tent. He was wearing the harness and badges that marked him as a commander. The metal of his armor and his battleaxe had been polished so that they gleamed in the sunlight. It took a moment for Slith and Gloth to recognize him.

"Thank you, men." The bozak clapped one of the bodyguards on the back. "I'll take it from here. Dismissed."

The two baaz troopers saluted and left the tent.

Slith and Gloth stared.

"What are you doing here?" Slith demanded.

"Just thought I'd stop by for a visit," Kang answered.

Slith stared at Kang, hard, then he said, "You're not really a deserter, are you, Kang?"

"No, I'm not. I'm an officer. I'm on my way to take command of a unit of draconians."

Slith eyed him. "That story you told, all about how you left that bridge-building school because you kept getting into fights, that was a lie, too?"

"Some of it," Kang admitted. "Not all. I really did keep getting into fights. But I didn't leave. I graduated with distinction. Lord Ariakas won his bet. I've been sent here to take command of a crack unit. One of the best in the army."

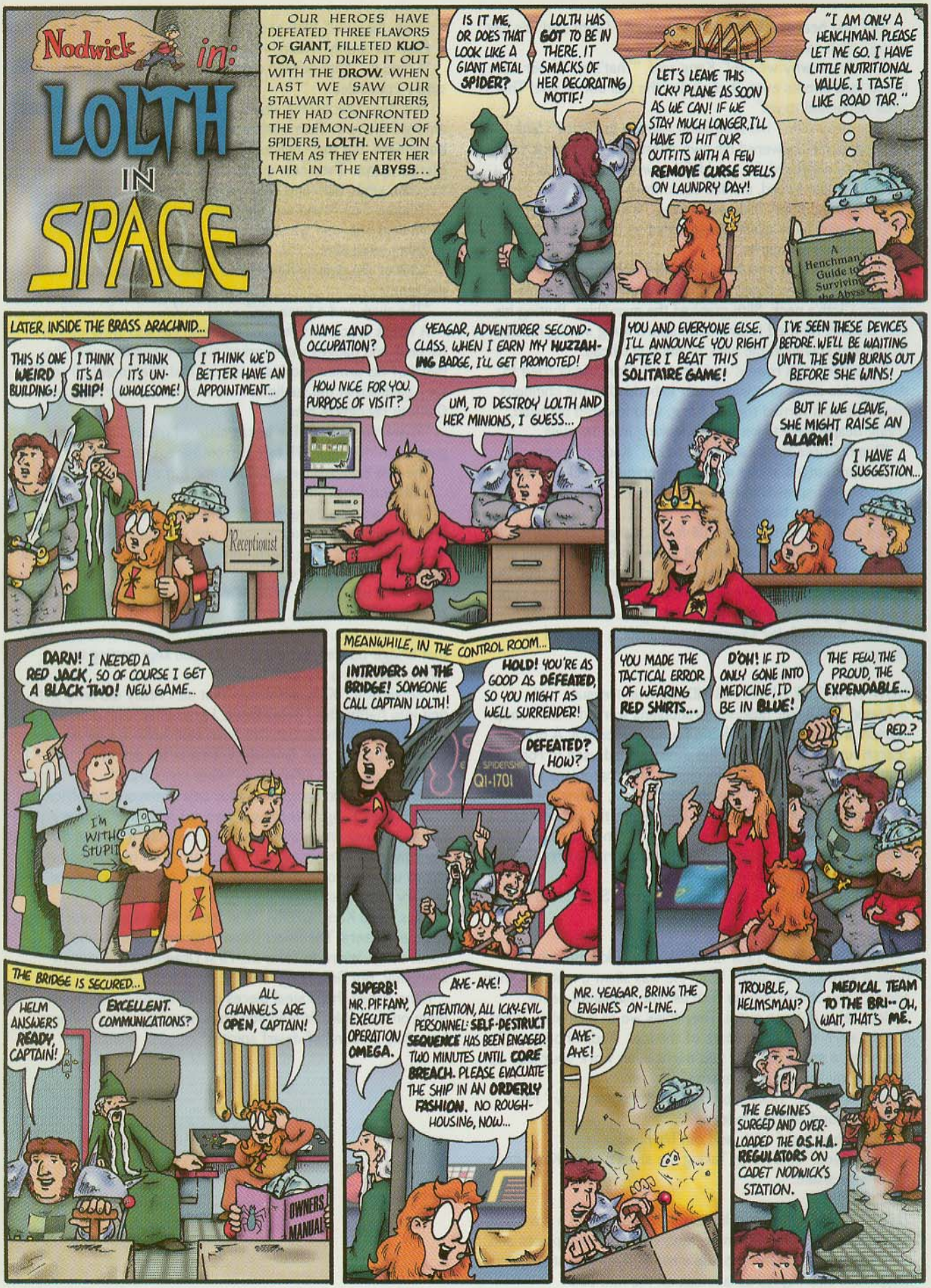
"Oh," said Gloth, interested. "What unit's that?"

"This one," said Kang. "I'm your new commanding officer."

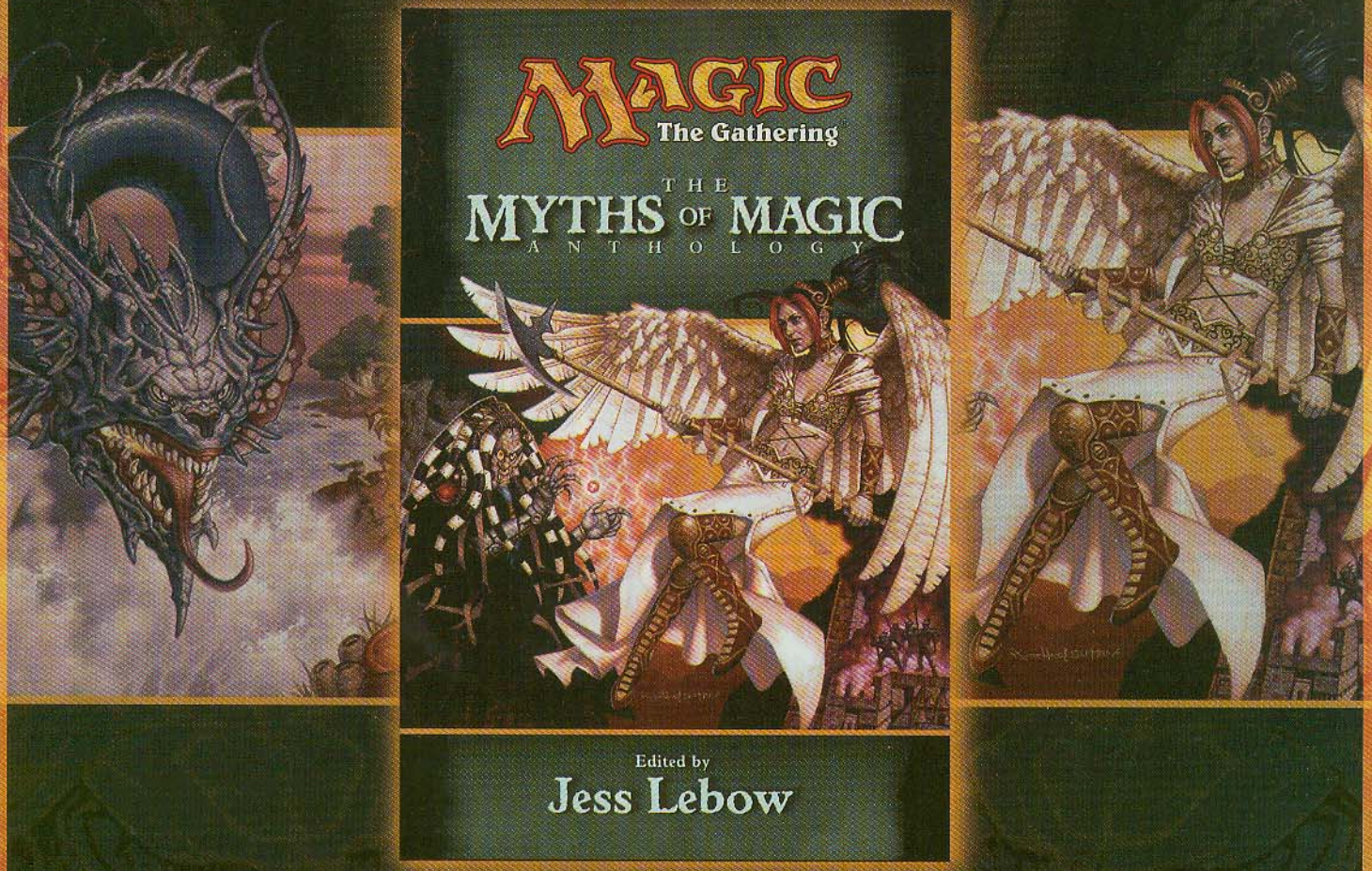
Slith eyed Kang, and his eye was not friendly. "You're going to have us out on parade every day, marching up and down mountains wearing hundred pound packs on our backs, waking us up at all sorts of ungodly hours, standing patrol, all that military crap, aren't you?"

"Yes." said Kang quietly. "And more. I'm going to teach you to be engineers. The finest damn engineers in this whole damn army. We're to form the First Dragonarmy Bridging Company. But first things first."

Kang fished three steel pieces out of his belt and tossed them on the table. "Would you boys happen to know where I can buy a round of dwarf spirits?"


Nodwick in:
LOLTH IN SPACE
OUR HEROES HAVE DEFEATED THREE FLAVORS OF GIANT, FILLETED KUO-TOA, AND DUKED IT OUT WITH THE DROW. WHEN LAST WE SAW OUR STALWART ADVENTURERS, THEY HAD CONFRONTED THE DEMON-QUEEN OF SPIDERS, LOLTH. WE JOIN THEM AS THEY ENTER HER LAIR IN THE ABYSS...
IS IT ME, OR DOES THAT LOOK LIKE A GIANT METAL SPIDER?
LOLTH HAS GOT TO BE IN THERE. IT SMACKS OF HER DECORATING MOTIF!
LET'S LEAVE THIS ICKY PLANE AS SOON AS WE CAN! IF WE STAY MUCH LONGER, I'LL HAVE TO HIT OUR OUTFITS WITH A FEW REMOVE CURSE SPELLS ON LAUNDRY DAY!
"I AM ONLY A HENCHMAN. PLEASE LET ME GO. I HAVE LITTLE NUTRITIONAL VALUE. I TASTE LIKE ROAD TAR."
A Henchman's Guide to Surviving the Abyss
LATER, INSIDE THE BRASS ARACHNID...
THIS IS ONE WEIRD BUILDING!
I THINK IT'S A SHIP!
I THINK IT'S UN-WHOLESOME!
I THINK WE'D BETTER HAVE AN APPOINTMENT...
Receptionist
NAME AND OCCUPATION?
YEAGAR, ADVENTURER SECOND-CLASS. WHEN I EARN MY HUZZAH-ING BADGE, I'LL GET PROMOTED!
HOW NICE FOR YOU. PURPOSE OF VISIT?
UM, TO DESTROY LOLTH AND HER MINIONS, I GUESS...
YOU AND EVERYONE ELSE. I'LL ANNOUNCE YOU RIGHT AFTER I BEAT THIS SOLITAIRE GAME!
I'VE SEEN THESE DEVICES BEFORE. WE'LL BE WAITING UNTIL THE SUN BURNS OUT BEFORE SHE WINS!
BUT IF WE LEAVE, SHE MIGHT RAISE AN ALARM!
I HAVE A SUGGESTION...
DARN! I NEEDED A RED JACK, SO OF COURSE I GET A BLACK TWO! NEW GAME...
I'M WITH STUPID
MEANWHILE, IN THE CONTROL ROOM...
INTRUDERS ON THE BRIDGE! SOMEONE CALL CAPTAIN LOLTH!
HOLD! YOU'RE AS GOOD AS DEFEATED, SO YOU MIGHT AS WELL SURRENDER!
DEFEATED? HOW?
SPIDERSHIP QI-1701
YOU MADE THE TACTICAL ERROR OF WEARING RED SHIRTS...
D'OH! IF I'D ONLY GONE INTO MEDICINE, I'D BE IN BLUE!
THE FEW, THE PROUD, THE EXPENDABLE...
RED..?
THE BRIDGE IS SECURED...
HELM ANSWERS READY, CAPTAIN!
EXCELLENT. COMMUNICATIONS?
ALL CHANNELS ARE OPEN, CAPTAIN!
OWNERS MANUAL
SUPERB! MR. PIFFANY, EXECUTE OPERATION OMEGA.
AYE-AYE!
ATTENTION, ALL ICKY-EVIL PERSONNEL: SELF-DESTRUCT SEQUENCE HAS BEEN ENGAGED. TWO MINUTES UNTIL CORE BREACH. PLEASE EVACUATE THE SHIP IN AN ORDERLY FASHION. NO ROUGH-HOUSING, NOW...
MR. YEAGAR, BRING THE ENGINES ON-LINE.
AYE-AYE!
TROUBLE, HELMSMAN?
MEDICAL TEAM TO THE BRI-- OH, WAIT, THAT'S ME.
THE ENGINES SURGED AND OVER-LOADED THE O.S.H.A. REGULATORS ON CADET NODWICK'S STATION.

Johnny Appleseed this ain't.



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I THINK ALL THOSE OOKY CREATURES ARE OUTSIDE!
READY FOR "BACKSTREET BOOGIE" MANEUVER!
MAKE IT SO.
SQUISH!
SQUISH!
SQUISH!
SQUISH!
SQUISH
YEE-HAA! THIS IS MORE FUN THAN SPIKING A SALAD BAR WITH GREEN SLIME!
WE'VE GOT TO TAKE THIS SHIP WITH US! TOURISM ALONE WOULD MAKE US RICH!
UH, CAPTAIN? I THINK SOME MUTINY JUST ARRIVED...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING? I JUST HAD THIS THING DETAILED!!
OUR HEROES FLEE THE WRATH OF LOLTH...
FASTER, GUYS! SHE'S GAINING ON US!
SHE GOT AWFULLY MAD WHEN YEAGAR FLOODED HER CHAMBERS BY VENTING THE WASTE RECLAMATION SYSTEM!
IT WAS PAYBACK FOR THESE SPIDER BITES! I'M GONNA SWELL LIKE A WATERMELON!
THE DOOR AT THE END OF THIS HALL SHOULD LEAD TO ENGINEERING. LET'S MOVE!
MR. SCOTT'S GUIDE TO THE SPIDER SHIP
SECONDS LATER, IN ENGINEERING
I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU CLEAN MY CHAMBERS WITH A STRAW!! WHERE ARE YOU?!!
YOU, SALAMANDER! WHERE ARE THE INTRUDERS?
NO INTRUDERS HERE, YOUR BLASPHEMOUSNESS!
THEY RAN IN HERE! WHERE COULD THEY BE?
I DUNNO. I'M JUST LIFTING SIXTEEN TONS...
I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU'VE SEEN THEM, EITHER?
NOPE, NOT A SIGN.
WE'RE JUST MAKING SURE THAT YOUR SHIP WILL GO UP LIKE A ROMAN CANDLE BEING KISSED BY A RED DRAGON.
FINE, CARRY ON--
UM...
I'LL GRIND YOUR SOULS INTO-- AW, CRAP...
RED ALERT
LOLTH: Hate you. Hate the Abyss. Took half your stuff. Love, Yeagar Hatar Pfffany Nadon
KA-FRIGGIN'-BOOM!
HEY! WE'RE OUT OF THE ABYSS! THAT EXPLOSION MUST'VE CREATED A DIMENSIONAL ANOMALY THAT SUNDERED THE FABRIC OF SPACE-TIME TO OUR PLANE OF ORIGIN WHICH ALLOWED OUR QUANTUM SIGNATURES TO--
GIVE IT A REST, ARTAX. "HOME SWEET HOME" IS MUCH SIMPLER AND LOOKS BETTER ON AN EMBROIDERY SAMPLER.
DO YOU THINK WE'VE SEEN THE LAST OF LOLTH? IS SHE STILL ALIVE OR IS SHE...
SQUISHED?
END

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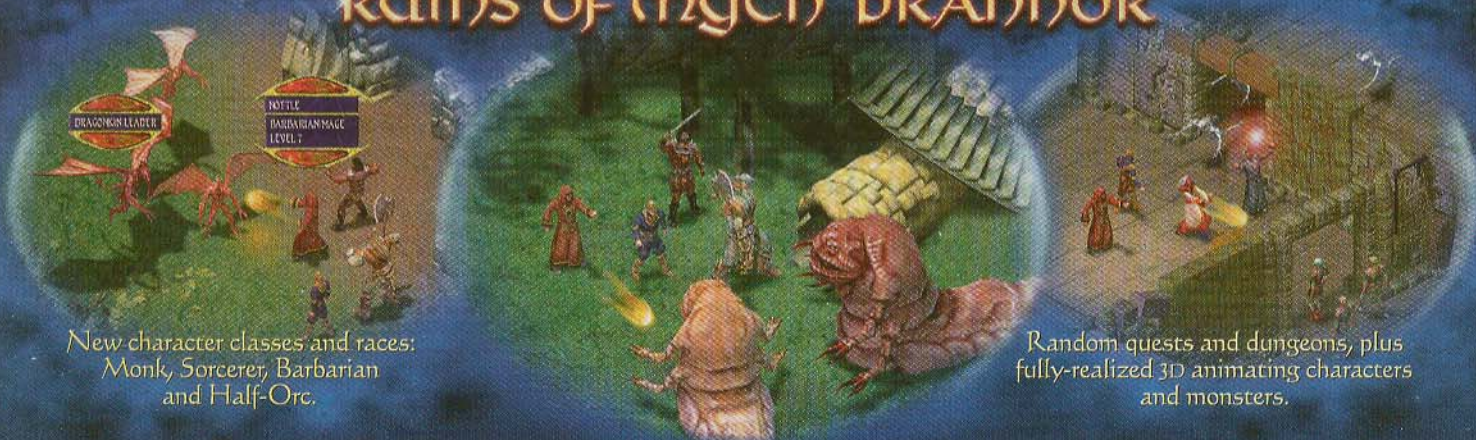

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Creature Codex:

by Johnathan M. Richards • illustrations by Dennis Cramer

THE ECOLOGY OF THE SHEET PHANTOM

The fever sent chills down Lord Scaumble's spine. He shivered under his thin blanket, teeth chattering as if it were already winter in the drafty old house. He considered lighting the fire but thought better of it: *Fuel costs money!*

"I'll tough it out. They'll see!" he muttered to himself. "Lousy healer, trying to charge me three pieces of gold for medicine! *Three!* Well, I'll do just fine without his overpriced potions. Besides, there's no telling what was in that bottle. Colored water, more than likely. The charlatan!"

Then another thought hit his fever-wracked brain. *What if it was poison?* The thought made sense to the ailing old man, for he knew that everyone was out to get his money. *Well, they'll have to do better than that,* he told himself. *Nobody's getting me that easily, and they won't get my money when I go. It's too well hidden, with far too many safeguards.*

The thought of his numerous traps put a wicked smile on Lord Scaumble's sallow countenance. With the clammy sweat of sickness dripping down his face, he closed his eyes and lay back on his tattered pillow. Muttering to himself, he dropped off to sleep, dreaming sweet dreams of his hidden darts, contact poisons, and falling block traps.

He never awoke.

Drake pointed at the silhouette of the abandoned house on the hill before them in the light of the full moon. "There it is: Scaumble manor." Jillian pressed close against him. Drake wrapped a protective arm around her, pleased at her reaction. He enjoyed the role of the brave, strong man.

"Nothing to be afraid of," he said. "I'm here with you. And nobody's seen crazy old Scaumble for months. The whole place is probably deserted."

"Do we have to go in?" Jillian asked.

"No, we don't *have* to. But we're going to, and I'll tell you why: They say Lord Scaumble's worth a small fortune. Nobody saw him leave town, so I figure he either snuck off somewhere for awhile or else he's dead. Anyway, I've got it from a reliable source that he keeps his money hidden in his house."

"Says who?"

"Let's just say a reliable source," repeated Drake, winking at Jillian. He had recently been invited into the local Thieves Guild and enjoyed dropping hints about his newfound prestige without naming names. Which was a good thing, since even members of the Upper Hand had been killed for blabbing.

"It's pretty run down," commented Jillian. "It doesn't look like the old man had any money at all, or he'd have been able to fix the place up."

"That's the whole point," argued Drake. "You don't want to advertise the fact that you've got money. Now come on. I want to give the place a once-over."

"Couldn't we come back in the daytime?"

"We could be seen in the daytime. Better to work in the dark. I brought a

1. **Sheet phantoms are created** when a thoroughly evil person dies in bed. The death need not be natural, as with Lord Scaumble's sickness; being slain in bed can do the trick as well. What matters most is that the person is evil and desperately does not wish to die, usually because there are matters to which he wishes to attend. Thoughts of vengeance often trigger the transformation into a sheet phantom, especially among those slain in bed.

   Some sages have speculated that the sheet phantom might be an undead form of a lurker above (a D&D monster from previous editions of the game). This is nonsense: Not only is the lurker above much larger than a sheet phantom, but it is found almost exclusively in subterranean environments. Sheet phantoms, on the other hand, begin their "unlife" inside a dwelling, usually a bedroom.
2. **Sheet phantoms move telekinetically** at a Speed of 20 feet (average maneuverability). When newly formed, they tend to move about as they did in life—that is, hovering above the floor at the same height as if they were still alive. As they learn more about their new forms, they gain the abilities of levitation and flight. Sheet phantoms can hover motionlessly in one spot if necessary. They often flatten themselves against a wall or ceiling and drop down upon their prey.
3. **Those who become sheet phantoms** after being killed in their sleep often sport impressive bloodstains on the fabric of their new "bodies."
4. **Although embodied in the linen** of a simple bed sheet, sheet phantoms can form invisible, ectoplasmic bodies that mirror the bodies they had in life. When such a humanoid body is formed, the sheet is

lantern for once we're inside. Now come on, we're wasting time."

Jillian shrugged and followed Drake up the path to the decrepit manse.

Lord Scaumble was amazed to find himself looking down at his own face. It was a face he was used to seeing every morning in his cracked mirror as he dragged his old razor across his chin. But this time it was different.

For one thing, his wart was on the wrong side. Scaumble had a wart half the size of a copper piece on the left side of his nose, and he scowled at it in the mirror every morning. Of course, in the mirror it looked like it was on his right side, but here it was on his left.

Even more disconcerting, his eyes were closed. That in itself was rather odd: How could you look at your own closed eyes? Then he realized with a start that his face was unnaturally still. He wasn't breathing!

It was at that moment Lord Scaumble realized he was dead.[1]

He sat up just then, knocking the thin blanket to the floor in the process. Looking down upon his frail form—his frail, dead form—he wondered just what he had become. A ghost?

draped as if over a human body,[4] standing in the reflection of Lord Scaumble's cracked shaving mirror.

How could this be? he thought. *How did I become trapped in my own bed linen?*[5] It made no sense. He stared at his reflection. *Come to think of it, how is it that I can see at all?*[6]

Puzzled, the sheet phantom floated back and forth across the bedroom, pacing, trying to put things together.

The doors were all locked. Drake expected that; in fact, he had even counted on it, for it gave him a chance to show off in front of Jillian. "Watch this," he said, spreading his tool kit on the back porch and selecting a lockpick by the light of the moon. Expertly sliding it into the lock, he wiggled it around, and ... nothing. "Wait a minute," he said. "Okay, I flick it just right, and ... this time for sure ... almost got it ... shoot." Jillian looked down at him, lips pursed, less than impressed.

"Let me try this one," Drake said, choosing another lockpick. "A quick twist, a little jiggle, and ... shoot. Okay, here we go ... no, wait a minute ... almost got it ... there!" He felt the lock give, pulled out his pick, and turned to Jillian for his well-deserved praise.

She wasn't there.

"Jillian?" called Drake quietly.

The door opened with a creak. Drake gasped in fright and jumped back a step before realizing it was Jillian herself in the doorway. "There was a broken window around the corner," she said. "Did I scare you?"

Drake bit back his anger and quietly put away his kit. Then, without a further word, he brushed past her and went inside. Jillian closed the door behind him. It shut with an eerie squeak, then all was silent.

Scaumble patrolled his house every night. He had become quite the creature of the night since his death; during the day, he became sluggish,[7] often spending hours upstairs in his bedroom simply watching his former body decay, a process he found quite fascinating. Flies had discovered his corpse soon after his death, and now it was riddled with squirming, white maggots. Lord Scaumble could only imagine the stench and was grateful that his sense of smell had not survived the trip into undeath.

The flies and maggots he suffered to live upstairs in his bedroom; after all, there was little they could do to his traps or his well-hidden money. He had found evidence of rats in the basement, though, and hunted them down whenever he could. He was worried about the rats; some of them were quite large and could conceivably set off one of his traps if they made their way upstairs, so he was ever on the lookout. Whenever a rat came into view, Lord Scaumble dropped his linen body onto the creature and wrapped it tightly within his folds, smothering it.[8] The death of each creature brought great pleasure to the sheet phantom, and in time he sought out the rodents for the delight of the kill as much as for the safety of his traps.

FLIES HAD DISCOVERED HIS CORPSE SOON AFTER HIS DEATH, AND NOW IT WAS RIDDLED WITH SQUIRMING, WHITE MAGGOTS.

He stood up—it felt as if he stood up[2]—and went to the mirror. He was shocked by what he saw.

Lord Scaumble was now, to all appearances, embodied in the stained, graying sheet from his bed.[3] He turned back to look at the bed. There was the blanket on the floor. There was his human body—no sheet. He turned back to the mirror. There was the sheet,

The lantern did little to illuminate the room. Everywhere there were shadows, as if the house knew of its master's death and refused to submit to the intrusion of light. Still, all Drake wanted was a quick look around. He seriously doubted he'd find Lord Scaumble's hidden treasure trove right away; this was more of a familiarization tour, as well

draped over it like a child in a Halloween costume. Forming such a body becomes second nature for the sheet phantom, and it can form or dissipate the body with a thought. The ectoplasmic body allows the sheet phantom to grasp small items (those weighing less than 5 pounds). Fine manipulation is not possible, for the invisible "hands" are covered with the fabric of the sheet. Thus, while a sheet phantom could pick up a candle, it couldn't light it with flint and steel or a tindertwig. It could push a book onto the floor but couldn't easily flip the pages.

The ectoplasmic "body" of a sheet phantom is not visible even to those able to see invisibile or ethereal creatures. It is closer to a field of energy than a physical object.

5. **Many sages speculate** that the bed linen acts as a resonator of psychic emanations, that during the hours spent in slumber the sheet becomes "imprinted" with the individual's life essence. This could be especially true if the person dies violently, as psychic phenomena have been traced to sudden violence.

6. **A sheet phantom sees and hears** as well as it did in life. It also has a limited sense of touch but is unable to taste or smell.

The sheet phantom has no facial features, with the exception of two glowing green spots that serve as its eyes. These "eyespots" appear only when the creature attacks, possibly to add to the terror of the victim. In any case, the sheet phantom's eyes can appear anywhere on its body. When floating with an ectoplasmic "body," the sheet conforms to the body's shape, and the eyes appear where one might

as a chance to impress Jillian. Unfortunately, his fumbling at the door had left her less than thrilled at his prowess. He'd have to find another way to get her to notice him.

Drake thought his chance had come when they heard the chittering and scratching of a rat—a rather large one, by the sound of it. Jillian pressed close to the young thief, throwing fearful glances all around her. Here's my chance, thought Drake, as he spotted the rat skittering across the floor.

Quick as a wink, Drake drew a dagger from his boot and let it fly. His throw was perfect, skewering the creature before it even knew what hit it. He put his hands on his hips and struck a confident pose, looking back at Jillian and expecting a look of deep admiration.

All he got was a look of disgust. "Ewww!" she cried. "Get it out of here!"

Disheartened, Drake recovered his dagger, wiped the blade on the rat's fur, and returned it to his boot. He kicked the dead rat out of sight.

"Do you think there are any more around here?" asked Jillian, swinging the lantern around worriedly.

"Probably," replied Drake. "Don't you worry, though. I'll keep you safe."

"Do you have any other knives?"

"Um, yeah ..."

"Let me have one, then. I'll feel safer—and not the one with blood on it. Yech!"

Drake pulled the small blade he kept sheathed at the back of his belt and passed it to Jillian, frowning at her lack of reassurance at his skill. This wasn't quite working like he had planned. He tried to focus on finding Lord Scaumble's loot. At least the night might not be a total loss!

"Let's try in here," he said, heading toward the kitchen.

Scaumble heard the voices downstairs and glided silently along the stairway. *So, looters have come at last,* he thought.

There were two of them, a man and a woman, both young. Lord Scaumble liked those odds. For a moment he considered allowing them to waste their time downstairs—all of the traps were upstairs, closer to the hidden loot in the attic—but the thought of two strangers going through his things infuriated the sheet phantom. He might have no use for kitchen cutlery in his undead form, but it was still his! Plus, if he allowed them upstairs so they could fall prey to one of his devious traps, he'd end up wasting at least one of them. Lord Scaumble realized that in his current form he'd be unable to reset the traps once sprung, so it was best to leave them as a last line of defense, to be used only if absolutely necessary.

With an urgency born of determination and hatred, the sheet phantom glided through the hallway and into the kitchen.

Pulling cobwebs from her hair, Jillian shrieked, "Ick! Spiders!" She had been checking out the walk-in pantry, hoping to discover a secret compartment.

Drake just shook his head and returned his attention to poking at the floorboards with his dagger, trying to find a loose one where Lord Scaumble might have stashed his loot. As a result, he didn't see the sheet phantom gliding up silently behind him.

Jillian did. "Drake!" she screamed, as the floating bedsheet spread out wide before dropping down on the unsuspecting thief. As it fell, Jillian caught a glimpse of hate-filled, green eyes glowing in the center of the sheet.

Despite Jillian's scream, Drake had no time to react before finding himself bound in a constricting mass of linens. He still had the dagger in his hand, but his arms were pinned at his sides.[9] He thrashed back and forth, kicking with his feet, but he couldn't escape.

Suddenly, a line of pain traveled down his right thigh as Jillian slashed at the creature with the small blade Drake had given her.[10] She cut a jagged slit in the animated sheet, enough to free Drake's right arm and allow him to wriggle free.

Drake managed to slip his head out from under the sheet and gasped for breath. He saw Jillian tugging at a corner of the sheet with all of her might, a look of fierce determination on her face. "Almost got it!" she cried with teeth clenched. Then, with a ripping sound, the creature was off of him, and Drake was free.

In the feeble glow of the lantern's light, Drake saw the sheet bob like a wild kite, Jillian still holding on to one corner. With an eerie grace, the thing spun around in midair, tattered edge flapping where Jillian's blade had cut Drake free,[11] and almost casually flipped over onto the young woman.

Time seemed to freeze for Drake. Propped on hands and knees in Lord Scaumble's kitchen, he was immediately aware of several things at once. Jillian had dropped her knife to tug the creature off of him; there it was on the floor at the edge of the lantern-light, stained with his own blood. The creature had wrapped itself completely around Jillian and was squeezing her tightly. Vaguely, he could hear her gasping and whimpering, as if from far away. Finally, his leg was still bleeding from where Jillian had gashed it cutting the monster off of him. It throbbed with a dull ache.

All of this took but a split second, and then Drake, with the quickness of his thief's training, had assessed the situation and come up with a plan of action. Limping, he got to his feet and hightailed it out the door, leaving behind his daggers, his lantern, Lord Scaumble's hidden fortune, and Jillian.

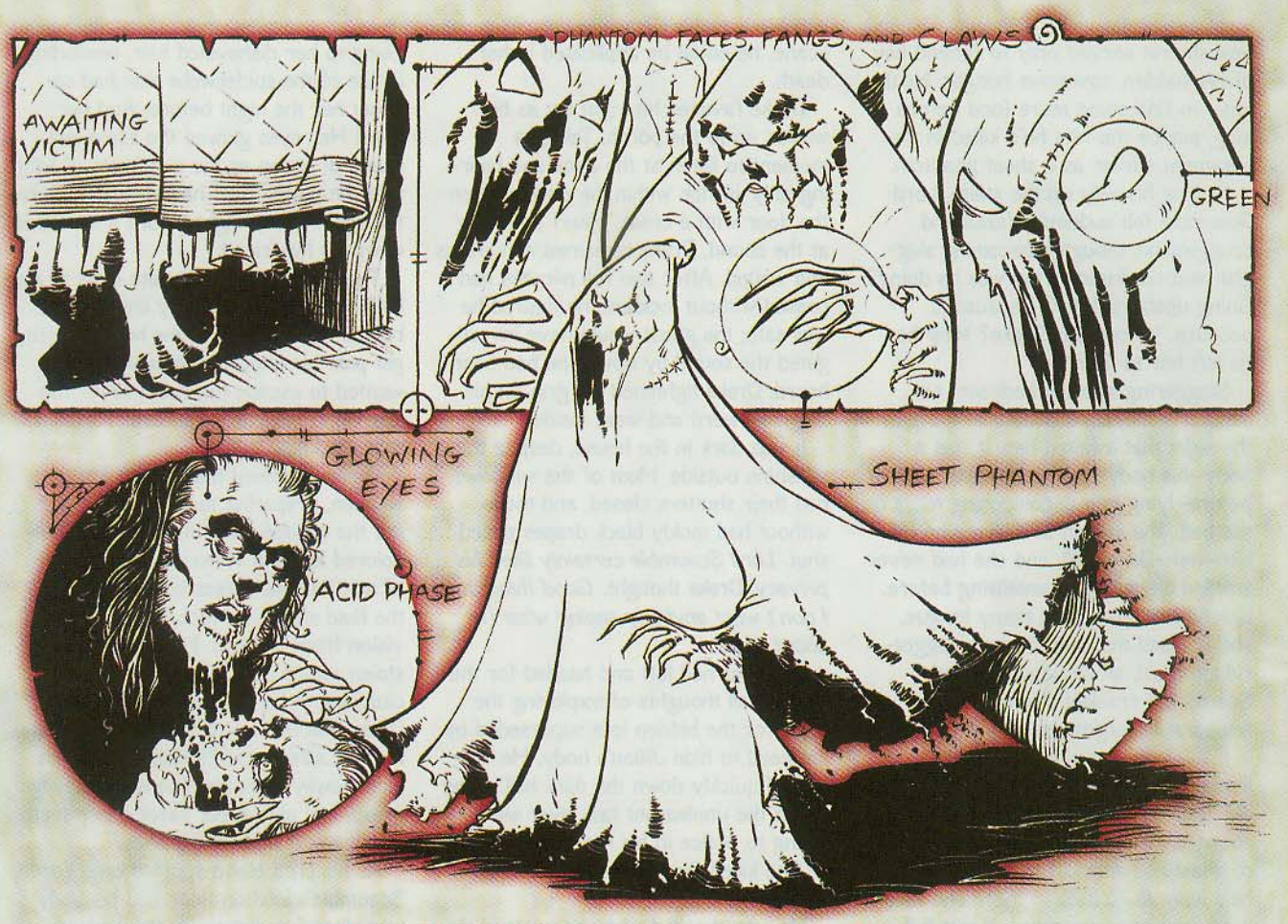
---

expect. When flattened against a wall or ceiling, the eyes are usually located at the center of the sheet, but this isn't always the case; the sheet phantom can cause its eyes to appear at a corner if it so desires. Furthermore, it can "throw" its eyes on either side of the sheet. When smothering a victim, the sheet phantom often focuses its eyes directly over those of its prey, watching the life snuff out of the victim's body as she suffocates, but the sheet phantom can project its vision outward if it hears the approach of another creature.

7. **Sheet phantoms are most active at night.** Exposure to sunlight slows them to half movement, and a sudden bright light (the casting of a *light* or *daylight* spell, for instance) causes them to recoil for 1d3 rounds.

8. **A sheet phantom must make** a normal attack roll when it drops onto a victim; success indicates it deals normal damage and attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. (See Grapple on page 137 of the *PH.*) If the phantom wins the grapple check, it has wrapped its prey in the folds of its body and suffocation begins. The following round, the victim must hold her breath or begin to suffocate. (See the Appendix at the end of this article or page 88 in Chapter 3 of the *DMG.*)

9. **The victim of a sheet phantom's** suffocation attack can attempt to escape once each round. The victim and the sheet phantom make opposed grappling checks; success on the victim's part indicates freedom. (The victim has the option of using an Escape Artist skill check against the sheet



The terrifying sheet phantom has several weaknesses. Holy water, fire-based attacks, and natural sunlight all have adverse affects on the creature.

Scaumble stared into the woman's terrified eyes and saw the moment when life passed from her body.

This time, he kept his linen form wrapped tightly around his victim. If the looters had already begun to snoop around his place, he'd have to be ready for them. As it was, there had been just two of them this first time, armed only with daggers, and look at what had happened: He had been injured and one of them had escaped. He'd have to do better than that if he was to keep his precious hoard intact!

He had slain the woman shortly before midnight. He stayed wrapped around her dead flesh all that night, and well into the next morning. The sun was near its zenith when the transformation was complete, and Lord Scaumble stood up on two solid legs once again.[12]

It was good to feel solid flesh again! Lord Scaumble turned from the kitchen and staggered down the hall, eager to climb up to his bedroom and get a good look at himself in his shaving mirror.

On his way, he passed the dead rat that Drake had killed the night before. A strange sensation passed over him, one he had all but forgotten during his time as a sheet phantom. He grabbed the rat with twisted fingers whose nails had grown overnight into claws and bit into the animal's dead flesh with teeth that had likewise become sharp and pointed.[13] Hunkering down into a squatting position, he ripped apart the rat with relish, devouring it all, down to the bones. After he was finished, he slid his long, blackened tongue over his lips and grunted in satisfaction.[14] It had been—what?—months since he'd eaten, and

phantom's grappling roll. See Grapple on page 137 of the *PH*.) The victim cannot attack the sheet phantom unless he or she holds a Tiny weapon, like a dagger or knife, when first enveloped. Animals are allowed their normal claw and bite attacks.

10. **If a sheet phantom is attacked** while enveloping prey, the victim suffers the same damage inflicted on the sheet phantom. After all, the creature is comprised of only a single sheet of linen, which does little to protect the victim within. On the other hand, while sheet phantoms are immune to bludgeoning attacks, the victim has no such protection, and any attacks with a blunt instrument on a sheet phantom that has successfully grappled someone inflicts full damage to the victim.

11. **Damage done to a sheet phantom** heals over time, at the rate of 3 hit points per day. Of course, any physical damage to the sheet phantom's linen "body" is permanent (once cut or ripped, the sheet remains so), but this does not hamper the creature. Sheet phantoms do not feel pain.

12. **The transformation from sheet phantom** to sheet ghoul takes about 12 hours, during which time the life essence trapped in the sheet is transferred into the slain victim. As part of the transformation process, the fibers of the sheet break down and merge into the body, so the sheet ghoul often looks like it's covered in cobwebs. The change is completely optional on the part of the sheet phantom; it can release itself from its slain prey and remain a sheet phantom for as long as it desires or merge with its victim and become a sheet ghoul.

now the rat served only to remind him of his sudden, ravenous hunger. He'd have to find some more food before long, maybe the rats he'd killed in the basement earlier as a sheet phantom.

Making his way up the stairs, Lord Scaumble felt suddenly dazed and drugged, his thoughts becoming sluggish and confused. What was he doing? Going upstairs. Why? Because ... because. Where was Drake? Why had he left her to die?[15]

Staggering into the bedroom on instinct alone, Lord Scaumble froze at the sight that awaited him. It was a body—his body—no, she'd never seen it before—lying in a decomposing mess on the bed. The stench of corruption hit him—her—like a wall, and she had never smelled anything so tantalizing before. Licking her lips with a raspy tongue, she crossed the room to her maggot-ridden feast, all thoughts of Lord Scaumble's cracked shaving mirror temporarily forgotten.

Drake stood at the path that led to the old Scaumble estate, gathering his courage. He still didn't know what kind of ghost had attacked him, but he knew he'd have to go back in there and face it. He had come prepared: It was full daylight, so maybe the ghost wouldn't be around, but just in case he had a vial of holy water with him. He had also borrowed a magic short sword from one of his new pals at the Upper Hand. Perhaps "borrowed" wasn't the best word, but he'd get it back before it was missed. He was unsure what would be effective against the undead creature, and he prayed he had chosen his weapons wisely.[16] There wasn't anything else he could think to do, so he took a deep breath and headed down the path toward the Scaumble estate. After all, he had unfinished business at the manor.

If anyone found Jillian's body there, with his dagger and lantern at the scene, he could be implicated in her death.

Drake favored his right leg as he walked up to the porch. Taking a moment to listen at the door and hearing only silence within, he pushed open the door with a creak. Heart pounding at the sound, Drake remained motionless and waited. After two full minutes had passed without incident, he figured he was safe; the ghost would have investigated the sound by now if he had been heard. Drake tightened his grip on his magical sword and went inside.

It was dark in the house, despite the sunshine outside. Most of the windows had their shutters closed, and those without had moldy black drapes pulled shut. *Lord Scaumble certainly liked his privacy,* Drake thought. *Good thing, too. I don't want anybody seeing what I'm about to do.*

Drake turned left and headed for the kitchen, all thoughts of exploring the place for the hidden loot superseded by the need to hide Jillian's body. He walked quickly down the dark hall, eager to get the unpleasant task over with, failing to notice in his haste that the rat he had killed the night before was no longer there.

He was shocked when he entered the kitchen, for Jillian was missing. Puzzled, he scanned the floor, thinking she might have crawled away before the ghost finished her. Worse yet, what if she escaped? Escaped, and lived to tell how he had abandoned her? That wasn't going to be good for his reputation!

"Looking for me?" a raspy voice asked from behind him.

All of the hairs on the back of Drake's neck stood up. He knew what he would find if he turned around.

He turned around anyway.

Jillian stood before him, lips twisted in a hideous rictus of a smile. Her skin was a pallid yellow-white; ragged claws extended from her fingers. Loose fibers clung to her disheveled hair, reminding Drake of the spiderwebs that had so upset her the night before. And her eyes! Her eyes glowed the same evil shade of green as the two spots of light that the young thief had seen shining on the sheet-ghost, right before it swooped down on his friend.

The two stood at opposite ends of the kitchen, the sole doorway immediately behind Jillian. Drake knew he'd have to get past his undead companion if he wanted to escape the room alive. The sparkle in Jillian's green eyes told him that she knew it, too.

Drake tightened the grip on his weapon, preparing to strike. He never got the chance. Jillian opened her liver-colored lips and vomited forth a stream of acid.[17] Drake screamed in agony as the fluid struck his face, burning the vision from his eyes. He dropped his stolen sword and the vial of holy water, clutching at his wounded face. Blinded, Drake was thrown to the floor with ease. He felt Jillian straddle his body, rip his hands away from his face with a savage grasp, and plunge her razor-sharp teeth into the soft flesh of his neck.

As his life's blood spurted onto Lord Scaumble's kitchen floor and his body was ripped to shreds by the undead body of the friend he had betrayed, Drake's final, insane thought was: *Now I'll never get to find the hidden loot!* Then his consciousness left him forever.

Lord Scaumble, firmly entrenched in the ghoul-body of the female looter, smiled down at his handiwork. Oh, it had taken a while to get used to the idea of being in a woman's body, but he had gotten over the initial shock. He had two arms and two legs, sharp teeth and claws; what else could he ask for? Besides, female or no, the body worked just fine when it came down to what mattered: the rending of flesh, the crushing of bones, and the sucking of sweet, sweet marrow.

Most sheet phantoms eventually long to possess a physical form once again, though, and so take advantage of the opportunity when they can.

This aspect of the sheet phantom makes it unique among undead creatures, as the sheet phantom can be thought of as the "larval stage" of the sheet ghoul. Few undead beings have such a cycle in their development.

13. **A sheet ghoul attacks twice** each round with its jagged claws; each claw attack deals 1d3 points of damage. In addition, the creature bites for 1d6 points of damage. Unlike normal ghouls, a sheet ghoul does not cause paralysis with its touch.

14. **Though undead, sheet ghouls** have an appetite for both freshly killed prey and carrion. As with true ghouls, the flesh they eat maintains their undead bodies, and they have a limited time as undead before their bodies decompose. Sheet ghouls can expect to "live" for about 200 years.

15. **Shortly after transformation** into a sheet ghoul, the creature becomes bewildered as its undead mind tries to make sense of two sets of conflicting memories: those of the evil individual who became the sheet phantom and those of the victim whose body became the template for the ghoul. Of the two, the victim's memories tend to be vague and indistinct, as the sheet phantom's evil intelligence holds sway. In time, the sheet phantom's mind gains full dominance, but occasionally a stray memory from the victim makes its way to the surface of the creature's mind.

16. **Holy water is a potent weapon** against sheet phantoms: Because of their linen nature, they absorb liquids and thus suffer 1d4+4 points of damage per vial of holy water instead of the standard 2d4. Fire is

Sheet phantoms typically attack by dropping upon their victims and suffocating them.

He climbed the stairs up to his bedroom, deactivated the blade trap in the far wall, and opened the top drawer of his bureau. Pulling on a pair of thick leather gloves from long habit, he pulled down the cord to the trap door in the attic before realizing the contact poison on the pull-cord need concern him no longer.[18]

Once opened, the trap door extended to become a ladder. Throwing down his gloves, Lord Scaumble picked up the trophy he had brought upstairs with him and climbed into the attic. The room was lit only by the feeble rays of sunlight peeking through various tiny cracks in the roof. Lord Scaumble stumbled down the length of the attic, passing his riches: hundreds of thousands of coins, mostly copper, that he had stashed away over his three score miserly years. The coins were stacked haphazardly, spilling out of old flour sacks, overflowing from wooden crates, forming small piles throughout the cramped attic.

Making his way to the back of the room, Lord Scaumble placed his trophy gently on the top of the largest loose pile of coins and smiled appreciatively at the result. Drake's severed head looked sightlessly out at Lord Scaumble's hidden loot, eyes bulging out and bubbling from the sheet ghoul's acid attack.

"Enjoy the view," the undead creature cackled, then turned away and climbed back down to his bedroom to reset his traps and resume his vigil.[19]

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also effective against sheet phantoms. Any fire-based attack (normal or magical) inflicts an extra point of damage per die rolled. Although the size of the sheet phantom's body varies depending upon the size of the sheet, it is considered a Medium-size creature in combat.

On the other hand, as undead, sheet phantoms are immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, *sleep*, paralysis, stunning, and disease. They are not subject to sneak attacks, critical hits, ability damage, subdual damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

17. **One of the major modifications** to the host's body during the process of transformation from sheet phantom to sheet ghoul is the development of acid-producing glands in the stomach cavity. A sheet ghoul can spit a thin stream of corrosive acid from its mouth to a range of 10 feet. The acid can strike only a single target and deals 1d8+1 points of damage (half damage with a successful Reflex saving throw). The acid is similar to the venom of many spiders, which begins breaking down organic matter so that the spider can slurp up the liquid remains.

Because of the extreme corrosiveness of the sheet ghoul's stomach acids, all ingested food is completely dissolved. Thus, although it eats prodigiously, the creature leaves no droppings.

18. **Sheet ghouls enjoy the standard** immunities of all undead.

19. **Sheet ghouls are solitary creatures** seldom found in any numbers. The only time several sheet phantoms are likely to be created simultaneously is during a plague. It is possible to imagine several sheet phantoms haunting the abandoned wing of a healing temple after such an outbreak.

APPENDIX: THE SHEET PHANTOM AND SHEET GHOUL

SHEET PHANTOM

Medium-Size Undead

Hit Dice	3d12 (20 hp)
Initiative	+3 (Dex)
Speed	20 ft., fly 20 ft. (perfect)
AC	17 (+3 Dexterity, +4 natural)
Attacks	Buffet +3 melee
Damage	Buffet 1d4+2 subdual
Special Attacks	Smother, improved grab
Special Qualities	Undead, darkvision 60 ft., immune to blunt weapons, weaknesses
Saves	Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +0
Abilities	Str 15, Dex 16, Con –, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 15
Skills	Listen +8, Move Silently +16
Feats	Blind-Fight

Climate/Terrain Buildings
Organization Solitary (1)
Challenge Rating 1
Treasure None
Alignment Chaotic evil
Advancement Range
4-6 HD (Medium-size); 7-9 HD (Large)

SHEET GHOUL

Medium-Size Undead

Hit Dice	4d12 (26 hp)
Initiative	+2 (Dex)
Speed	30 ft.
AC	16 (+2 Dex, +4 natural)
Attacks	2 claws +3 melee, bite +0 melee
Damage	Claws 1d3+2, bite 1d6+2
Special Attacks	Acid spray
Special Qualities	Undead, darkvision 60 ft.
Saves	Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +0
Abilities	Str 14, Dex 15, Con –, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 14
Skills	Climb +6, Hide +4, Jump +6, Listen +10, Move Silently +8, Search +6, Spot +8
Feats	Multi-Attack, Weapon Finesse (claw)

Climate/Terrain
Any land or underground
Organization Solitary (1)
Challenge Rating 2
Treasure Standard
Alignment Chaotic evil
Advancement Range
5-8 HD (Medium-size); 9-12 HD (Large)

A sheet phantom is the undead manifestation of an evil person who died in bed, embodied in the bedsheet that covered the corpse. It has no facial features save two glowing, green eyespots. Sheet phantoms glide effortlessly through the air by an innate form of telekinesis.

Combat

Sheet phantoms attack by dropping upon unsuspecting prey and suffocating them in the folds of their bodies.

Improved Grab (Ex): A successful attack indicates the phantom deals normal damage and attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. (See Grapple on page 137 in the *PH*.) If the phantom succeeds at the grapple, it has wrapped itself around its prey. The following round, the victim must either hold her breath or begin taking suffocation damage. (A character can hold her breath for 2 rounds per point of Constitution. After this time, the character must make a Constitution check (DC 10) in order to continue to hold her breath. The check must be repeated each round, and the DC increases by +1 for each previous success.) If the victim runs out of breath, she falls unconscious (0 hp). In the following round, she drops to -1 hit points and is dying. In the third round, she suffocates. A victim can escape a sheet phantom's embrace by making an opposed grappling check or an Escape Artist roll against the sheet phantom's grappling roll. While encumbered, a victim can only use a Tiny weapon like a dagger, and then only if it was in hand when first enveloped by the sheet phantom. Damage inflicted on a sheet phantom while it encompasses a victim causes an equal amount of damage to the victim. Blunt weapons inflict full damage upon the victim but do not harm the sheet phantom.

Undead: Sheet phantoms are immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, *sleep*, paralysis, and disease. They are not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

Weaknesses: For all their deadly suffocation ability, sheet phantoms have a number of weaknesses. Holy water inflicts 1d4+4 points of damage per vial on a sheet phantom instead of the standard 2d4 points of damage. In addition, all fire-based attacks (normal or magical) inflict an extra point of damage per die. Finally, sheet phantoms recoil from natural sunlight and bright lights (like a *daylight* spell). If exposed to direct sunlight, sheet phantoms take 1d3 points of damage. They move at half speed during the day.

Spawn

A sheet phantom can merge with the body of any humanoid it slays. The process takes about 12 hours, after which time the victim and sheet phantom transform into a sheet ghoul.

A sheet ghoul is the result of a sheet phantom merging with its humanoid victim. It looks like a normal ghoul, but closer inspection might reveal wispy strands of white material clinging to its face like cobwebs or a decaying shroud. This is the remains of the sheet phantom's linen form.

Sheet ghouls devour carrion and freshly killed prey.

Combat

Sheet ghouls rend with their claws and bite with their sharp teeth.

Acid (Su): A sheet ghoul's breath weapon is a fine spray of powerful stomach acid that inflicts 1d8+1 points of damage, or half that with a successful Reflex save (DC 14). The acid stream has a range of 10 feet and can target only a single victim. A ghoul can spray acid in melee combat, but it cannot use its bite attack if it uses the acid spray. Spraying acid is a ranged attack, so using this ability in melee combat provokes attacks of opportunity.

Undead: Same as sheet phantom.

Sheet ghouls are almost always encountered singly. They are shunned by normal ghouls and ghasts, who attempt to drive sheet ghouls away whenever they are encountered. This might simply be out of fear, but it probably also has something to do with the fact that a sheet ghoul cannot "propagate" its species the way ghouls and ghasts can. Since both ghouls and ghasts are often found running in packs, they have no use for an undead creature that is unable to expand the pack's own numbers.

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The Adventures of Volo

CORMYRIAN CONTACTS

by Ed Greenwood · illustrated by Ron Spencer

Volothamp Geddarm, at your service, gentles, setting truths of the Realms before you like a row of perfect mates for as many love-lorn suitors. This day I write of the right people for your needs.

Those who desire to make their fortunes in the rich realm of Cormyr often try to ingratiate themselves at court or with nobles they deem powerful—and find themselves inevitably at the bottom of a long line of grasping social climbers, limited from rapid advancement in their fortunes and in anyone's regard by the alliances they've just made.

Those whose purposes are a trifle shady or less than respectable (adventurers, for example) often find court officials, feuding nobles, or established merchants to be unsuitable contacts for getting things done with any speed or efficiency. It is to fill this pressing need that I set down certain contacts I have made, or learned of, who are active or interested in the Forest Kingdom of today.

Here then, in no particular order, are some folk who might be useful to the newcomer to Cormyr. These are by no means all who can serve such ends, and many Cormyrians might find some of my choices surprising. Unlike almost all other advisors, I dismiss most courtiers, who are far too adept at twisting the strivings of those who come to them to serve their own ends. Moreover, unlike most, I do not neglect the elves who preceded the human realm and still remain, nor yet avowed foes of the realm—though finding these might well be difficult, and working with them perilous. Undertake such overtures at your own risk, for I, Volo, did not send you off upon them, nor did I by any means recommend such persons.

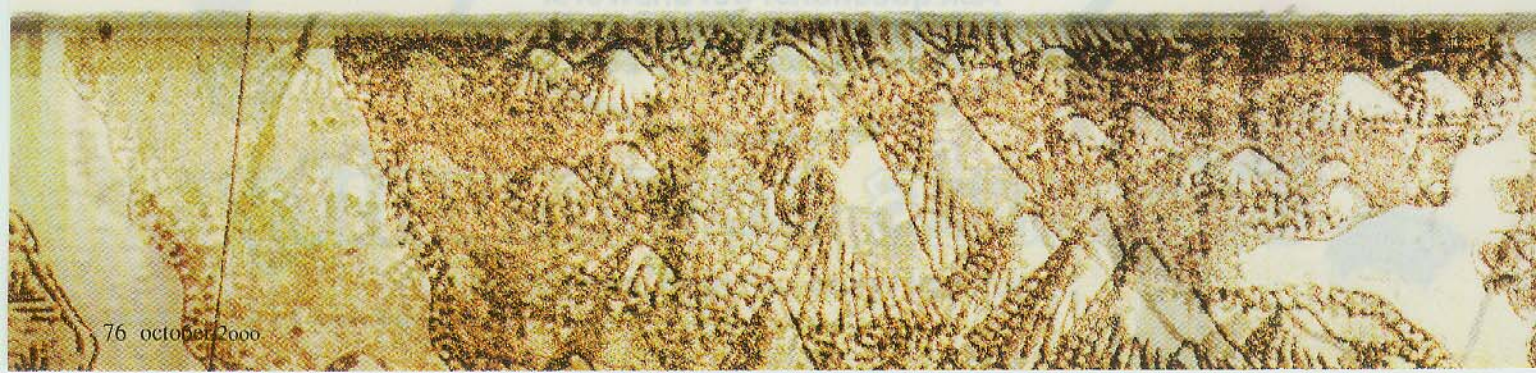
Darlutheene Ambershields

(1317 DR-)

An overweight, gossipy lady of the court whose pretentions far outstrip the actual station of her family (longtime Palace servants), Darlutheene's naked greed at the feast-table and shallow selfishness denied her a mate when her charms might have snared her one. These days, in a succession of increasingly tight and outlandishly flamboyant gowns, she seeks a man—any man—whose station is such that she'll profit from the match.

A lifelong resident of Suzail, Darlutheene now attends the most drunken of court revels and firmly leads many a staggering noble into the darker bowers of the Royal Gardens. Come morning, none of them evidence any desire to remain in her company for so much as morningfest, let alone for the rest of her lifetime. She's growing desperate—but that doesn't stop her from sneering condescendingly at the younger beauties at court and pretending to have been overly familiar with everyone from the Court Wizard to the First Trumpeter of the Gate.

Darlutheene has curly blond hair (usually tinted green and pink at the temples), and long, false, green eyelashes frame her striking violet eyes. Her several chins always sport artfully-applied beauty spots. Her figure is, well, ample, and her gowns are an extravaganza of daring plunges and cutouts, upswept plumes, and tinkling glass pendants cut to look like diamonds. She is a ridiculous



figure, and many of her catty observations are unintentionally hilarious.

"Ambermouth" (as she's known behind her back) might best be found at a revel, but best cultivated at her home, the green-tile-trimmed tallhouse that stands on the south side of the Promenade, four doors west of the Old Dwarf tavern, directly across from the Royal Court.

Blaerla Roaringhorn
(1326 DR-)
A slightly lighter, shorter brunette version of her friend Darlutheene Ambershields, Blaerla is a spiteful, judgmental loosetongue who never stops peeking and eavesdropping except when she's excitedly passing on what she's seen (and, of course, embroidering it in the process) to belittle someone else at court. This makes her ideal for an outsider who wants to spread word of his arrival or doings—so long as Blaerla can sniff some hint of mystery, deceit, or scandal, her tongue wags ceaselessly on your behalf. Cautioning her not to say something almost guarantees it being all over the Palace by the next nightfall!

A lady-in-waiting to Alusair (when that princess is at the Palace—hitherto a rare event indeed), Blaerla has much idle time to gather Palace gossip and pass it on to all who'll stop in the rooms she's charged with minding, chatting over mint wine or the drinks called "white frothies." On one memorable occasion, she even rattled on to Vangerdahast, who was in magical disguise—until she passed on a juicy rumor about how the Royal Magician spent his nights! (Blaerla's noble lineage saved her from dismissal, but her duties became, if possible, less important overnight.)

These days, Blaerla's nigh-constant partner in gossip is her friend Darlutheene, who is perhaps her only friend. Blaerla dotes on "Darling Dutheene," whose secrets she really does keep, but Darlutheene seems too mad for men to really notice.

Blaerla is always teetering on the brink of plunging from robust plumpness into being clearly and simply fat. She has snapping brown eyes and very red lips, and colors prettily (and often) when excited.

Known as "the Roarer" to those amused by her, and "the Tongue That Never Sleeps" or "the Shrieking Horn" to those less enchanted, Blaerla can best be contacted at her house, a triple-balconied tallhouse on the south side of the Promenade across from the Royal Court, and some seven doors down from the Dragon's Jaws tavern.

Huldyl Rauthur
(1335 DR-)
This war wizard of Cormyr is short, burly, and brown-haired, sporting a moustache big enough to hide his mouth. He has amber eyes, likes to wear lots of rings, and enjoys ale. Loyal to the Crown, he is in awe of Court Wizard Vangerdahast, and works hard at perfecting small spells and presenting them to the master mage as gifts.

Vangerdahast is amused and approving; he sees Huldyl as a useful servant of Cormyr who could grow to be quite a capable battle-wizard if never overly embarrassed at court or challenged with too great a crisis.

Unfortunately, the Abraxus Conspiracy handed Huldyl such a crisis, and he retreated for a time into grim watching and waiting, drinking heavily and playing endless games of chess with his close friend and fellow War Wizard Kurthryn Shandarn.

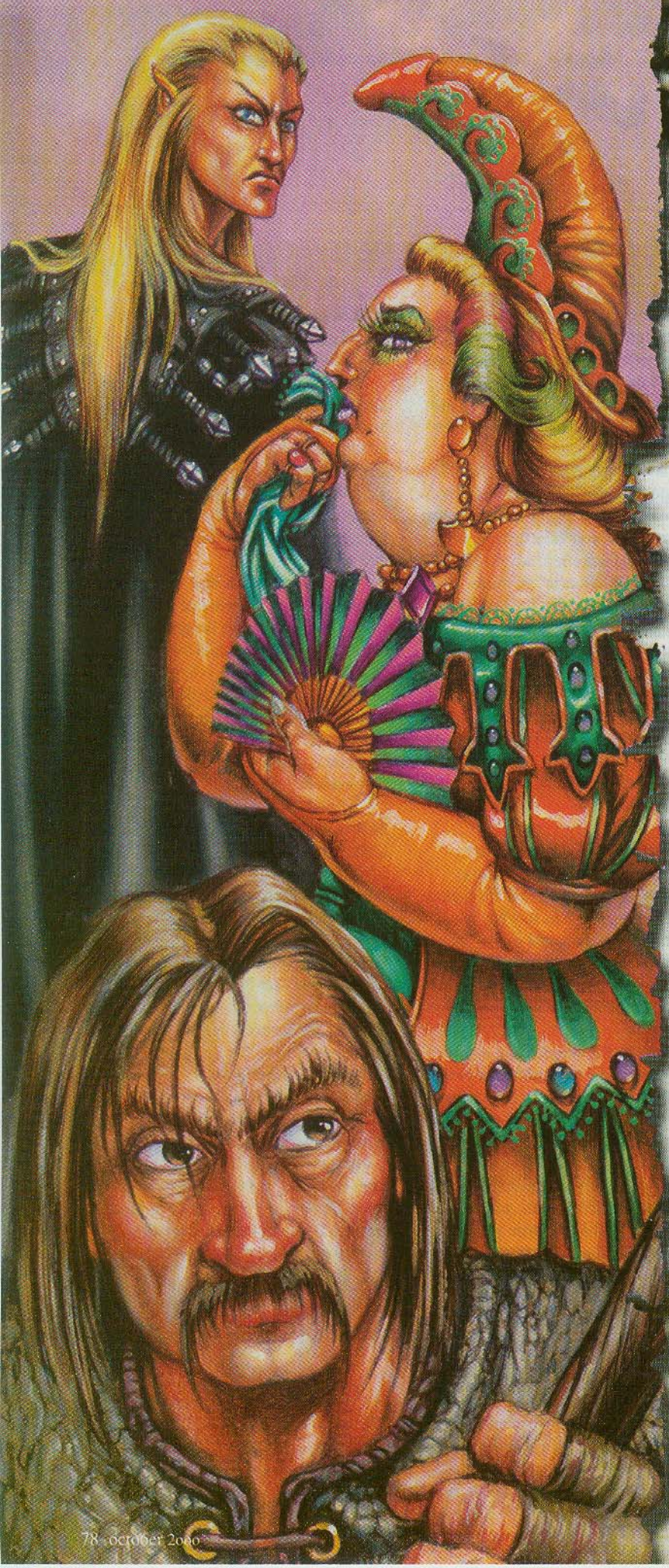
Only now is he again seeking a bolder role in court affairs, but he has found himself lacking in matters to be important about. This need, coupled with his relative lack of shrewd judgment (when compared with his superiors Vangerdahast and Laspeera), makes Huldyl ideal as a voice for outsiders seeking things done at court in Cormyr.

Huldyl dwells in the War Wizard apartments in the upper floors of the Horngate (where the Way of the Dragon enters the city of Suzail), but spends most of his waking hours either traveling about southern Cormyr on official business or in the Royal Court complex, consulting with Vangerdahast and doing the Royal Magician's go-between and fetch-and-carry work.

Ingleiyr Tammarast, Lord of Landuth
(1352 DR-)
An impoverished minor border lord among the nobility of Cormyr, the young Lord of Landuth only recently inherited his holdings, which lie on the western verge of the Vast Swamp, east of Ghars.

Ingleiyr's father invested unwisely in schemes for farming floating water plants in the swamp, and the new Lord of Landuth found himself ruling over a tumbledown keep, two hamlets, and fourteen or so farms between them, all of which were in need of coin.

Ingleiyr has been trying to make ends meet by raising cattle—cattle he'd like to sell to Sembia more cheaply overland, through Daerlun, than through the Marsember route that royal decrees



force him to use.

When Chalipur Hathangos offered him a covert arrangement of mutual advantage, Ingleiyr listened—but was infuriated to learn that the Sembian wanted him to leave Cormyr and join Sembia!

Lord Landuth will listen to you, too—so long as there's money in it for him. Need goods or people (even a modest army) housed and hidden for a time? Kept captive? Brought into a Cormyrian fortress—or even the Palace itself—as part of the retinue of a minor lord of the realm? Tammarast is your man—not disloyal to Cormyr or to the Crown, but with no time for courtly rules or niggling laws, which are fripperies he literally cannot afford. He's also not adverse to a little adventure, even if it means tricking Purple Dragons and their officers.

Ingleiyr has a tousled mane of black hair, brown eyes, a rough voice and rougher hands, and customarily wears plain leathers—the same breeches and vest that his men working down in the pens and the fields wear. He offers his guests mint wine and beer, lacking the funds to give them more than the plain bread and stew he himself eats. He'll be found either at Landuth Castle, at the southern edge of his holdings, or more likely in the fields with his herds.

Chalipur Hathangos

(1333 DR-)

This rich, fat Sembian merchant has a silken-soft voice, fat white hands that have never known toil, billowing silk robes embroidered with dragons eating their own tails ("Appropriate," Ingleiyr Tammarast once murmured), and is bald-

1. Ye would say "blabbermouth." Ah, the joys of explaining Volo ...

2. These would now be the Western Robing Room (where courtiers—not nobility—can change their garb or more often adjust their garments, hair, and applied cosmetics), Lord

ing; what little hair he has left (above his ears, and fringing his mouth) is red and curly. Hathango's many ruby rings mirror the strange red hue of his eyes, and he customarily wears a body-scent closely acquainted with exotic Thayan and Chessentan spices. The only armor he wears consists of magical bracers—and his own self-importance.

Inheriting a fortune built in the textiles and gems trade, Hathango now owns his own shipping fleet, though he itches to do something bold and successful that wasn't already done for him by his late father, Ghalador. He's looking to become a major force in livestock rearing, hence his need for lands he can dominate without having to pay for them, and his overtures to Tammarast. (See the previous entry.)

He smokes incense-laced tobaccoes from Thay and drinks cherry-flavored liqueurs from Chessenta and Threskel. Offers of beer, mint wine, and lesser beverages will be accepted—but with a sniff and a curled lip.

Hathango can be found most often in Daerlun, but might also be found from time to time in Wheloon, Suzail, or Immersea. Look for the most expensive and luxurious accomodations, and ask for him there. Be aware that Hathango goes nowhere without two hulking bodyguards, a pair of acrobatic slayers-for-hire who keep a lower profile but are seldom out of range of aiding their employer.

Sabran Cormaeril

(1350 DR-)

Sabran is a young, ambitious, scheming "blade" of the court—who slew or tried to slay—several nobles during the recent Abraxus Conspiracy. Now in exile, Sabran heads a shadowy band of dispossessed young nobles and dreams of one day ruling Cormyr.

Sabran delights in sending agents (hirelings, servants who left the Forest Kingdom with their masters, and other young exiled nobles who are exiled but can't resist a trip home in disguise) into Cormyr—south of the Starwater, that is. To Sabran, the rest of Cormyr has always been a wild backwaters where hunters and farmers toil, and he has no desire to dirty his hands among them.

Sabran's eyes and brows are black, his hair is a dirty blonde, and he's short, slender, agile, and clean-shaven. His clothes are the most dashing that fashion allows, and he always goes armed, swaggering about the many taverns of Westgate or Selgaunt (he slips from one to the other "to keep Obarskyr assassins guessing," though I think he fancies himself far more important than the Crown does) as if he was a royal prince, just as he once strutted in Suzail. He surrounds himself with many well-armed louts, of course, and his agents are willing to do anything in Cormyr, from carrying messages and delivering funds (at which, surprisingly, they can be trusted) to arson, slayings, and stealing wagons or even ships in harbor!

The best way to contact Sabran is to leave word at upscale tipple-houses, and await a response from one of his bravos.

Shaundyl Berethryl

(-998 DR-)

Six feet tall, soft-spoken, lithe in his movements, and menacing in his dealings with humans, this gold elven warlord dresses in close-fitting black garments adorned with everbright silver and is seldom without a small forest of throwing knives on his person (sheaths for one or more are worked into every ornament).

Arrogant and energetic, he bristled with fury at having to surrender Lythtlorn[3] to "bestial, unwashed" humans. Shaundyl dwells now in the depths of the Hullack Forest, surrounded by fearsome forest beasts that he dominates into serving him as guardians when hunting parties make forays into the green depths. He dreams of the day elves will rule all of Cormyr again. He will do nothing to harm the land (its forests in particular), but will otherwise covertly aid any humans interested in shattering the Obarskyr rule, weakening the War Wizards, or in bringing down general slaughter and unrest upon the realm. Those who use fire or chop trees he will never trust, no matter what goals they profess.

Shaundyl can best be contacted by leaving a written message for him within the edge of the Hullack Forest and waiting patiently at a country inn or cottage nearby specified in the message. He'll be aware of any forays into his forest and will eventually recover the message and come to where you wait with many magical and bestial allies, ready for treachery on your part.

Others

I, Volo, am well aware that many other exiled or discontented nobles are ripe for use as agents in affecting change in Cormyr. Nor have I forgotten that Red Wizards of Thay are rumored to have been involved up to their blood-drenched elbows in the Abraxus Conspiracy. At present, however, I'm seeking safer allies and contacts within the Forest Kingdom and might present my findings, if they shine well enough, at some future time.

Valdasher's Solar (given over to an untidy and growing collection of plants banished by the Crown Princess from the rest of the Palace), and the Room of the Ruby Archers. This last is named for a series of rather voluptuous red-dyed stone statues of female foresters plying their bows in a line down the center of the room. Seats have been placed backing onto each statue's plinth, and the out-of-the-way room is much used each day by lady courtiers for gossip, gossip, and more gossip.

3. Know ye that "Lythtlorn" was a name used by some local Fair Folk to describe the Wolf Woods, or what is now Cormyr.

HUNTER of the DEAD

by Monte Cook • illustration by Wayne Reynolds

The hunter of the dead is the hated enemy of all undead. She spends each restless night tracking them to their lairs and cleansing the land of their foul presence forever.

The hunter of the dead possesses many tools with which to fight against such creatures. Her skills with arms are the match of any fighter, but, to aid her in the hunt, she also possesses spells and special abilities that draw upon her connection with positive energy. Most hunters of the dead are clerics or paladins. Fighters, rangers, monks, druids, and barbarians also make excellent hunters of the dead, while rogues and bards add their subterfuge skills to create a foe that the undead never see coming. Sorcerers and wizards—especially those with a few levels as cleric or paladin—have many advantages when fighting the undead, so they should never be discounted as potential hunters of the dead.

As NPCs, hunters of the dead are quiet loners, driven to think of little but their cause. They usually have some traumatic tale of what brought them to hate the undead, but few are willing to share it with those that they meet as they wander from town to town. In places where spirits are particularly restless and the dead walk in numbers, hunters of the dead gather in secretive orders to pool their strength and attack their foes together.

HUNTER OF THE DEAD

HIT DIE D8

Lvl	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day 1	2	3	4
1	+1	+2	+0	+0	*Detect undead*	0	—	—	—
2	+2	+3	+0	+0	Smite undead	1	—	—	—
3	+3	+3	+1	+1	Spurn death's touch	1	0	—	—
4	+4	+4	+1	+1		1	1	—	—
5	+5	+4	+1	+1	True death	1	1	0	—
6	+6	+5	+2	+2		1	1	1	—
7	+7	+5	+2	+2		2	1	1	0
8	+8	+6	+2	+2	Positive energy burst	2	1	1	1
9	+9	+6	+3	+3		2	2	1	1
10	+10	+7	+3	+3	Sealed life	2	2	2	1

Lvl The level of the hunter of the dead.

Attack Bonus The hunter of the dead's attack bonus, added to the character's normal attack bonus.

Fort. Save The save bonus on Fortitude saving throws, added to the character's normal save bonus.

Ref. Save The save bonus on Reflex saving throws, added to the character's normal save bonus.

Will Save The save bonus on Will saving throws, added to the character's normal save bonus.

Special Level-dependent class features.

Spells Per Day These are divine spells (see the *PH*, Chapter 12) that are prepared and cast just as a cleric casts his spells. For all spell effects dependent on the caster's level, treat the hunter of the dead as equal to her hunter of the dead level.

REQUIREMENTS To qualify to become a hunter, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Alignment Any non-evil
Base Attack +5
Knowledge (undead) 5 ranks
Special Ability Must be able to turn undead.
Special The hunter of the dead must have lost one level or ability score point to the draining power of the undead. This is the scar of unlife that all hunters of the dead carry.

CLASS SKILLS Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

The hunter of the dead's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are:

Concentration (Con)
Heal (Wis)
Knowledge (religion) (Int)
Knowledge (undead) (Int)
Profession (Wis)
Ride (Dex)
Search (Int)

See the *Player's Handbook*, Chapter 4 for skill descriptions.

SPELLS

1st Level
magic weapon
cure light wounds
invisibility to undead
remove fear

2nd Level
cure moderate wounds
continual flame
darkvision
bull's strength

3rd Level
cure serious wounds
protection from elements
searing light
halt undead

4th Level
cure critical wounds
death ward
freedom of movement

CLASS FEATURES

• **Weapon and Armor Proficiency** Hunters of the dead are proficient with all simple and martial weapons, with all types of armor, and with shields.

• ***Detect Undead*** At will, the hunter of the dead can *detect undead* as a spell-like ability. This ability duplicates the effects of the spell *detect undead*.

• **Spells** Beginning at 1st level, a hunter of the dead gains the ability to cast a small number of divine spells. To cast a spell, the hunter of the dead must have a Wisdom score of at least 10 + the spell's level, so a hunter of the dead with a Wisdom of 10 or lower cannot cast spells. Hunter of the dead bonus spells are based on Wisdom, and saving throws against these spells have a DC of 10 + spell level + Wisdom modifier. When the hunter of the dead gets "–" spells for a given level, the character cannot cast any spells of that level. When the hunter of the dead gets "0" spells of a given level, such as 0 1st-level spells at 1st level, the hunter of the dead gets only bonus spells. A hunter of the dead without a bonus spell for that level cannot yet cast a spell of that level. The hunter of the dead's spell list appears above; she has access to any spell on the list and can freely choose which to prepare. A hunter of the dead prepares and casts spells just as a cleric does (though the hunter of the dead cannot lose a spell to cast a cure spell in its place).

• **Smite Undead** Once a day, a hunter of the dead of 2nd level or higher can attempt to smite undead with one normal melee attack. She adds her Wisdom modifier (if positive) to her attack roll and inflicts 1 extra point of damage per level; for example, an 8th-level hunter of the dead armed with a longsword would inflict 1d8+8 points of damage, plus any additional bonuses for high Strength and magical effects that normally apply. If the hunter of the dead accidentally smites a creature that is not undead, the smite has no effect but it is still used up for that day. Smite undead is a supernatural ability. Note: A paladin/hunter of the dead can both smite evil and smite undead in the same day, potentially against the same target (if it's an evil undead).

• **Spurn Death's Touch** A 3rd-level hunter of the dead applies her Wisdom modifier (if positive) as an additional bonus to all saving throws versus effects and spells used by undead. Will saves thus add double the normal Wisdom modifier.

• **Positive Energy Burst** In lieu of two normal turning attempts, a hunter of the dead can create a positive energy burst that inflicts 1d6 damage for every class level of hunter of the dead the character has attained to all undead creatures within 100 feet of the character. Undead are allowed a Reflex save (DC equal to 10 + the class level of the hunter) to avoid half of the damage.

• **True Death** Undead slain by the hunter of the dead, either by melee attacks or spells, can never rise again as undead. They are forever destroyed.

• **Sealed Life** Upon reaching 10th level, a hunter of the dead cannot lose levels due to energy draining effects (although death still results in level loss, as do other level or experience draining penalties). D

"I hate zombies. Drive a sword through one's heart, it just keeps coming. Gotta hack the damn things to bits—or turn them and deal with them later."

—Fik, rogue/paladin

VS. ZOMBIES

Beat 'em, Don't Join 'em

by James Wyatt

Zombies have no special attacks; it's their defenses that make them fearsome opponents. As undead, they're immune to critical hits and many spells. They also have d12 Hit Dice and the Toughness feat. They're sponges for damage—and if they're the shock troops for a more powerful opponent, like the necromancer who animated them, they can keep you occupied while their master blasts you with spells.

Preparation

If you expect to be facing zombies, here are some things to consider while building your character:

Power Attack and Two-Weapon Fighting: When fighting zombies, do whatever you can to maximize the damage you deal each round. A zombie's poor Armor Class means any option that reduces your chance to hit but increases your damage is a good one. If you use Power Attack to maximum effect, you'll probably still hit, and the increased damage drops them more quickly. Similarly, feats like Ambidexterity and Two-Weapon Fighting help you attack with two weapons while retaining some degree of accuracy. Even at -4 to hit with one or both weapons, you'll still hit with both often enough to drastically increase your damage potential.

Mighty Weapons: When selecting your weapons, make sure you choose those that do a lot of damage on their own, rather than relying on the weapon's critical range or critical damage, since zombies are immune to critical hits.

Reach and Range: Use a reach weapon or a ranged weapon to attack zombies without letting them hit you back. With a reach weapon, you can attack from a safe distance, then back up without provoking an attack of opportunity. If the zombies charge you on their turn, you'll get an attack of opportunity on them before they get to you. This works especially well with weapons that you can set against a charge, such as a longspear. A ranged weapon works just as well. The only problem is that you tend not to do your best damage with a ranged weapon, so it might take longer to destroy the zombies. Holy water is another good ranged weapon, though it's an expensive method for low-level characters.

Mobility and Spring Attack: In lieu of a reach weapon, feats like Mobility and Spring Attack help you make your attack and then get out of the zombies' way. With Mobility, you're more likely to escape the attack of opportunity you provoke by moving away. With Spring Attack, the zombie doesn't even get the attack of opportunity in the first place.

Damaging Spells: Make sure your spellcasters have some good damage spells like *magic missile, Melf's acid arrow,* or *fireball.* Spells particularly useful against undead, like *disrupt undead* or *searing light,* are also great choices. Don't forget that cure spells harm undead, so if turning fails, your cleric can still hurt the zombies with a simple touch attack.

Metamagic Feats: Damaging spells are great; Empowered or Maximized damaging spells are better. Empower Spell is more within reach of the low-level spellcaster, as even a 3rd-level wizard can cast an Empowered *disrupt undead,* dealing as much as 9 points of damage with a ranged touch attack.

VS. ZOMBIES HELPFUL TIPS

- —Turn early, turn often.
- —Sacrifice attack bonus for damage.
- —Remember that cure spells hurt undead.
- —Stay out of reach!
- —Fight a few at a time.

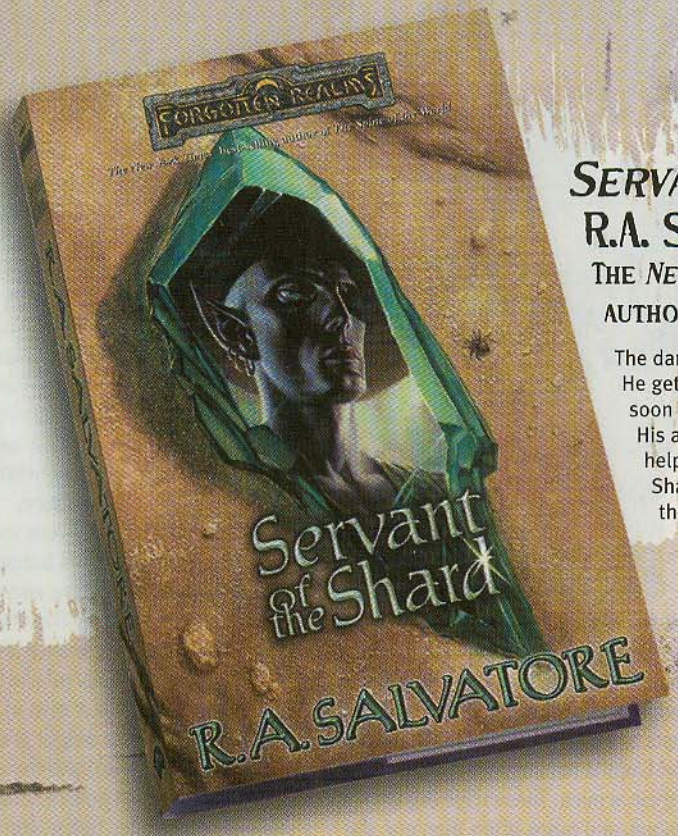
Tactics

When battle is joined, send your cleric forward for a turning attempt. Ideally, the zombies will retreat—then the rest of your party can pepper them with arrow fire from behind. As long as the cleric doesn't attack them, the turning remains effective.

Keep Your Distance: If allowed to get too close, zombies can quickly bludgeon you to death while sucking up all the damage you can deal. Fortunately, it's not hard to keep a safe distance from zombies—they're slow, and the only way they can move and attack in the same round is with a partial charge, which must be in a straight line. Use whatever obstacles are available (or create your own) to make sure the zombies don't have a straight line to charge you. Meanwhile, hit them with ranged or reach weapons, and they might never get to attack.

Positioning: Don't bother trying to flank zombies; you don't need the attack bonus, and rogues don't get their sneak attack damage bonus. Instead, make sure they can't flank you. Stand in a tight clump of four characters, or pair off back-to-back against a wall. If you can, lure them into a hallway or another narrow space so your best fighters can concentrate on battling one zombie at a time in the front rank, supported by spells and missiles from the back. The zombies that are forced into the back ranks will have nobody to attack, and that's a good thing. D

HEROES 32 VILLAINS 73



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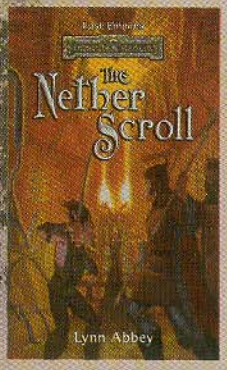

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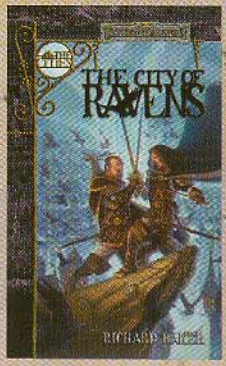

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FORGOTTEN REALMS

UNFORGETTABLE ADVENTURES

Wizards of the Coast

DENIZENS OF THE WORMCRAWL FISSURE

by James Jacobs · illustrated by Brian Snōddy

The Wormcrawl Fissure is a mile long spur of the infamous Rift Canyon in the Flanaess. Much of the Rift Canyon is fairly well explored (if only by bandits), but the depths of the Wormcrawl remain a mystery. It's rumored that the Wormcrawl was once the seat of power of Kyuss himself, a master in the art of creating undead, who vanished without a trace centuries ago. Some believe he moved to another plane to continue his research, while others believe he still dwells deep in the Wormcrawl. One thing is certain: The Fissure is infested with the remaining forces of his undead legions. Most of these are the deadly sons of Kyuss, but a wide variety of other undead beings also dwell in its depths: wights, mummies, vampires, and hounds of Kyuss. (See DRAGON #270.)

Not all of the denizens of the Wormcrawl Fissure are undead. The Fissure contains two distinct environments: the Heights and the Depths. The Heights extend about 300 feet down into the Fissure; this region is fairly densely populated with tough gangs of bandits and goblinoids. These groups have chosen the Wormcrawl as their base for the privacy afforded by its terrible reputation. Giant vermin are rife here, along with all sorts of birds, bats, and other flying creatures. There are even rumors that a section of the Heights is colonized by a group of wyvern-riding derro that have adapted to surface life. Two unique lifeforms make the Heights their home as well. One is the energetic and highly dangerous riftjumper, a huge insect capable of making death-defying leaps from ledge to ledge along the cliff walls. Another is the beautiful but deadly ciruja plant.

The Wormcrawl Depths are a different story altogether. This region is largely unexplored and constantly shrouded in noisome mist. The extent of the depths is unknown, but estimates place the deepest point at well over a mile below sea level. The sun never penetrates the mists in this region, affording a comfortable environment for the masses of undead that lurk here. Caverns and passageways honeycomb the walls and floor of the Fissure, providing a home to yet more undead. Priests of Iuz often travel to the Wormcrawl Depths to "harvest" these undead for their armies. These trips are dangerous missions, and more often than not, the harvesting patrols never return to their masters.

There are two notable non-undead lifeforms that dwell in the Wormcrawl Depths. First are the nerephtys. These amorphous earth elementals subsist on the bodily minerals of organic matter; their hefty resistances against necromantic effects allow them to prey on the undead of the Wormcrawl with relative ease. Also lurking here are the terrible avolakia. Kyuss subjugated this race of inhuman necromancers long ago, and they remain in the Wormcrawl Depths where they worship him as a god.

Finally, the true lords of the Wormcrawl Depths are the dread ulgurstasta. Dubbed the "beasts of Kyuss" by the few who have survived encounters with the massive undead, the ulgurstasta represent one of Kyuss' greatest necromantic achievements. It's fortunate for the rest of the Flanaess that these undead-spawning monsters are few.

The avolakia is a nauseating creature that combines the worst aspects of a worm, an octopus, and an insect. They have above average intelligence and are incredibly wise and glib. Combined with their ability to assume pleasing forms, they were valuable minions when Kyuss needed spies or diplomats. Where Kyuss discovered the avolakia is unclear; most likely he found them on one of his forays into the Underdark, took a liking to their wormlike appearance, and brought some back to the Wormcrawl Fissure.

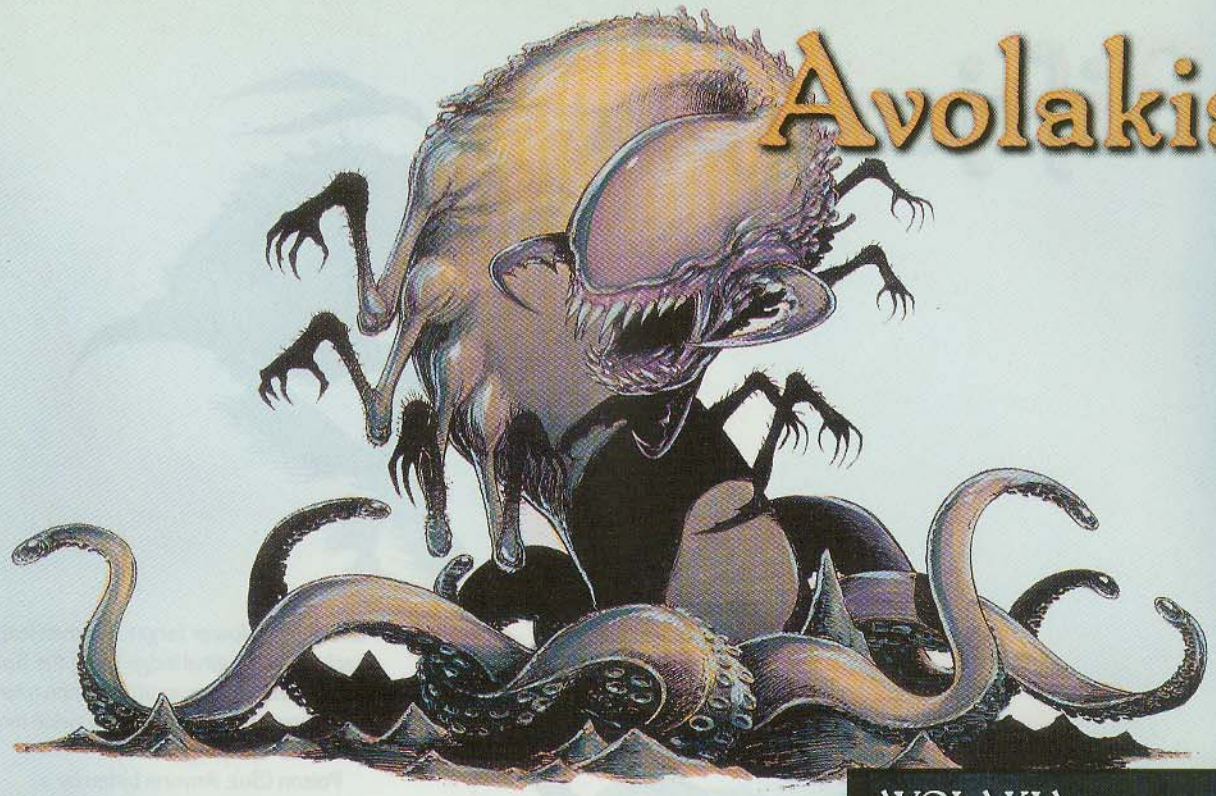
In the time since Kyuss vanished, his avolakia minions have banded together in small tribes deep in the recesses of the Wormcrawl Fissure. They have taken to worshiping Kyuss as their deity, and many have become powerful clerics. Avolakia tend to keep to their own in the depths of the Fissure. They delight in creating and modifying undead, and they sometimes raid bandits and goblins in the Heights, and underdark races below, for fresh stock.

Avolakia stand 10 feet tall. Their wormlike bodies are pallid and gray, shimmering with a pale yellow slime. They support themselves and move about on a set of six suckered tentacles, each of which is tipped with a multifaceted yellow eye. Their "head" consists of a sheath that houses a set of three cruelly hooked mandibles. Eight long spidery arms tipped with tiny insectoid claws that almost look like human hands protrude from a set of ridges about halfway up the creature's body. Avolakia reek of mold and decay.

Although they can eat and digest dead or living flesh, avolakia find this practice disgusting and resort to such measures only under dire circumstances. They prefer to eat undead flesh—"fresh" off an animated zombie's flank is best.

Avolakia speak their own language (a guttural, slobbering tongue). They also understand Undercommon and other languages on occasion, but they do not possess the vocal apparatus to speak them.

Avolakia



To circumvent this, the avolakia have developed special abilities that allow them to alter their forms into those that can more easily communicate with outsiders. They find that this ability also grants them excellent disguises that they use to lay ambushes.

COMBAT

Avolakia cast spells or use their spell-like powers from a distance while their undead minions close to melee with the enemy. If forced into melee, avolakia bite and flail with their eight claws.

Spell-like Abilities (Sp): An avolakia can create the following effects at will as a 10th-level sorcerer: *chill touch, cause fear, detect magic, disrupt undead, gentle repose, ghoul touch, halt undead, mage hand, read magic,* and *spectral hand.* It can *polymorph self* into any humanoid form at will. Three times a day it can create the following effects: *animate dead, enervation,* and *vampiric touch.*

Poison (Ex): Avolakia venom is a strange substance that weakens a victim's will. Anyone bitten by an avolakia must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 18) or take 1d6 points of temporary Wisdom damage. After 1 minute, the victim must save again or take 2d6 more points of temporary Wisdom damage. Avolakia are fond of poisoning their victims and then assuming humanoid form to use their suggestion power.

Suggestion (Sp): When in humanoid form, an avolakia's voice is melodious and hypnotic. It can cast a quickened *suggestion* spell as a 10th-level sorcerer against any one creature in range that understands the avolakia's spoken words. Eye contact with an avolakia during its *suggestion* inflicts a -2 penalty to Will saves vs. the *suggestion.* The avolakia can make these *suggestions* a number of times per day equal to its Charisma modifier.

Slime (Ex): The slime that an avolakia constantly exudes gives it resistance (10) against fire. It also grants a +10 competence bonus to any Escape Artist checks.

Regeneration (Ex): It suffers normal damage from acid, fire, and electricity.

Immunities (Su): The avolakia has a supernatural resistance to the attacks of most undead. As a result, it is completely immune to energy drains, paralysis, disease, and cold.

Spell Resistance (18) (Ex): Spellcasters must make a successful level check (DC 18) to determine if their spells affect the avolakia. The same is true of creatures attempting to target an avolakia with a spell-like ability.

Avolakia Characters: Many avolakia possess several levels as sorcerers; they nearly always focus on Necromantic magic. The leaders of avolakia tribes are always priests of Kyuss, with access to any two of the following domains: Death, Evil, Magic, or Trickery. Most avolakia clerics choose the Death and Evil spheres.

AVOLAKIA

Large Aberration

Hit Dice	10d8+30 (75 hp)
Initiative	+3 (Dex)
Speed	20 ft.
AC	18 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +6 deflection)
Attacks	Bite +10 melee, 8 claws +8 melee
Damage	Bite 2d6+4 plus poison, Claws 1d4+2
Face/Reach	5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks	Spell-like abilities, poison, suggestion
Special Qualities	Darkvision (60 ft.), slime, regeneration (4), immunities, spell resistance (22)
Saves	Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +12
Abilities	Str 18, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 16, Wis 21, Cha 22
Skills	Bluff +14, Concentration +9, Diplomacy +12, Sense Motive +12, Spellcraft +10
Feats	Multiattack, Skill Focus (Bluff), Spell Focus (Necromancy)
Climate/ Terrain	Underground (Wormcrawl Fissure depths)
Organization	Solitary, band (2d4), or tribe (4d6 avolakia, 3d10 zombies, 2d6 wights, 1d6 mummies)
Challenge Rating	10
Treasure	Standard coins, standard goods, double items
Alignment	Usually neutral evil
Adv. Range	By character class

Riftjumper

RIFTJUMPER

Medium-size Magical Beast

Hit Dice	4d10+4 (26 hp)
Initiative	+11 (+7 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)
Speed	60 ft., Climb 30 ft.
AC	21 (+7 Dex, +4 natural)
Attacks	Bite +8 melee, 2 legs +3 melee
Damage	Bite 1d8+4 plus poison, legs 1d4+2
Face/Reach	5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.
Spec. Attacks	Poison
Spec. Qualities	Darkvision (60 ft.), great leap, leg spines
Saves	Fort +5, Ref +11, Will +1
Abilities	Str 18, Dex 24, Con 13, Int 5, Wis 11, Cha 11
Skills	Climb +12, Jump +30, Spot +6
Feats	Improved Initiative, Mobility, Spring Attack
Climate/ Terrain	Temperate Cliffs (Wormcrawl Fissure depths)
Organization	Swarm (2d6)
Challenge Rating	5
Treasure	None
Alignment	Always neutral
Advancement Range	5-8 HD (Medium-size), 9-12 (Large)

Riftjumpers dwell in the upper reaches of the Wormcrawl fissure, where they feed upon the bandits and goblins brave enough to live there. Riftjumpers are so named due to their propensity for leaping from ledge to ledge with amazing speed and precision. Swarms of riftjumpers bounding along the ledges of the sheer cliffs of the Wormcrawl are a breathtaking sight.

Riftjumpers have incredibly long (about 10 feet) spindly legs, affording them great reach and maneuverability. Their bodies are relatively small in comparison measuring a mere 3 feet in length and are vaguely antlike in shape. Riftjumper heads are triangular and sport both a pair of feathery antennae and a set of razor sharp mandibles. When excited or enraged, hundreds of needle-like spines bristle up from the many joints in their legs.

The strange nature of riftjumper venom has led many to believe that riftjumpers were magically created by some ancient wizard or priest, perhaps even by Kyuss himself.

COMBAT

Riftjumpers are incredibly agile and take full advantage of this in combat. They leap from one ledge to another to make an attack on a slower target and then leap back to the original ledge using the Spring Attack feat. They can attack once a round with their poisonous bite and twice more with their spiny legs.

Poison (Su): Anyone bitten by a riftjumper must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 14) or become slowed as their muscles begin to lose flexibility. This effect is identical to the *slow* spell as if cast by an 8th-level sorcerer. After 1 minute, the victim must make another Fortitude save or take 2d4 points of temporary Dexterity damage as their muscles and skin become rigid and brittle. Until this lost Dexterity is replenished, every successful attack against the victim causes an additional 2 points of damage. Riftjumpers are fond of pushing their poisoned victims off high ledges so they shatter below, conveniently breaking them up into bite-sized chunks.

Great Leap (Ex): Riftjumpers have a natural talent for making leaps of incredible distance. When making Jump skill checks, their height does not limit their distance. In addition, riftjumpers can always take 10 when using the Jump skill, even in stressful situations. Thus a riftjumper can consistently make leaps of these distances:

Running Jump	70 ft.
Standing Jump	36 ft.
Running High Jump	22 ft.
Standing High Jump	12 ft. 8 in.
Jump Back	10 ft. 8 in.

If the riftjumper wants to jump farther, it must make a normal Jump skill check.

Leg Spines (Ex): Anyone attacking a riftjumper with a Small or Tiny melee weapon must make a Reflex save (DC 14) or take 1d4 points of damage from the hundreds of spines on its legs.

Skills: Riftjumpers have a +19 racial bonus to Jump checks.

Nerephtys

The nerephtys is a rare form of earth elemental that infests the lower reaches of the Wormcrawl. It spends most of its time in a dormant state, during which it looks like an inanimate mass of flowstone.

When it attacks, a nerephtys rears up in a column of stone that looks like several partially melted candles twisted together in a braid. A pair of sunken red eyes glare from the apex of the column, under which is a cavernous maw filled with hollow teeth of translucent crystal.

The nerephtys roves the valleys of the Wormcrawl's floor in a constant search for food. It is not above feasting on the many undead beings that lurk in the fissure; the elemental has little to fear from such creatures due to its stony composition and resistance to magic.

Adventurers sometimes seek the nerephtys for the oil of its nucleus. Once extracted, this substance retains some of the beast's ability to crystallize. One nerephtys yields enough oil to petrify one Medium-size being. This petrifaction effect lasts for 1d2 hours before wearing off, affecting the target as the *statue* spell.

COMBAT

The nerephtys attacks with one bite per round, using its ability to appear as normal rock to surprise its victims.

Improved Grab (Ex): When it makes a successful bite, the nerephtys can make a free grapple check without provoking an attack of opportunity. If the grapple check is successful, the nerephtys then fuses its hollow teeth with the target's body. Escape Artist checks are useless against this grab; the only way to escape is to slay the nerephtys or to tear free with a successful opposed Strength check. This deals 2d8 points of damage to the victim.

Ability Drain (Su): Once the nerephtys has grabbed a victim, it does 1d4 points each of temporary Strength and Constitution damage per round as it extracts all the minerals from a victim's body.

Damage Reduction 10/+1 (Su): The nerephtys ignores the first 10 points of damage dealt by a non-magic weapon.

Earth Mastery (Ex): A nerephtys gains a +1 bonus to attacks and damage if both it and its foe touch the ground. If an opponent is airborne or waterborne, the nerephtys suffers a -4 penalty to attacks and damage.

Elemental Immunities (Ex): The nerephtys is immune to poison, *sleep*, paralysis, and stunning. They are not subject to critical hits and cannot be flanked.

Crystallization (Su): A nerephtys can harden its body to the consistency of solid rock at will as a free action. A petrified nerephtys has a hardness of 15, but it can't move or attack in this form and must spend a standard action to return to "normal" state. This, coupled with its natural spell resistance, makes a crystallized nerephtys difficult to slay.

Spell Resistance (28) (Ex): Spellcasters must make a successful level check (DC 28) to determine if their spells affect the nerephtys. The same is true of creatures attempting to target a nerephtys with a spell-like ability.

NEREPHTYS

Large Elemental (Earth)

Hit Dice	6d8+36 (63 hp)
Initiative	+3 (-1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)
Speed	10 ft.
AC	15 (-1 Dex, -1 Size, +7 natural)
Attacks	Bite +8 melee
Damage	Bite 2d8+7 and ability drain
Face/Reach	5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks	Ability drain, earth mastery, improved grab
Special Qualities	Crystallization, damage reduction (10/+1), elemental immunities, spell Resistance (28)
Saves	Fort +11, Ref +1, Will +2
Abilities	Str 20, Dex 8, Con 22, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 11
Skills	Hide +7, Listen +8, Spot +8
Feats	Improved Initiative
Climate/ Terrain	Underground (Wormcrawl Fissure depths)
Organization	Solitary
Challenge Rating	7
Treasure	None
Alignment	Always neutral
Advancement Range	7-12 HD (Large), 13-18 (Huge)

Ulgurstasta

ULGURSTASTA

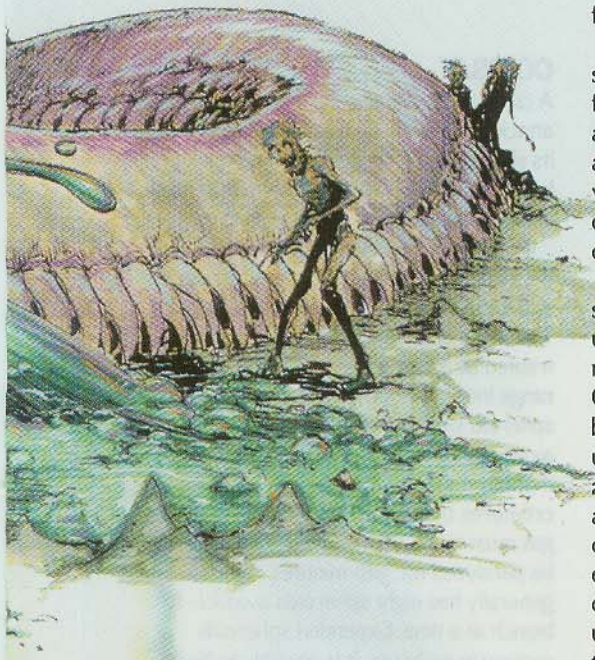
Gargantuan Undead

Hit Dice	17d12 (110 hp)
Initiative	+6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)
Speed	40 ft.
AC	17 (+2 Dex, -4 Size, +9 natural)
Attacks	Bite melee+13
Damage	Bite 3d6+13
Face/Reach	10 ft. by 10 ft./20 ft.
Special Attacks	Improved grab, swallow whole, necromantic acid, spawn skeletons, breath weapon, tendrils
Special Qualities	Darkvision (60 ft.), damage reduction (25/+3), undead, immunity to cold and acid, spell resistance (21)
Saves	Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +13
Abilities	Str 28, Dex 14, Con —, Int 18, Wis 16, Cha 18
Skills	Intimidate +22, Listen +12, Search +13, Spot +21
Feats	Combat Reflexes, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Cleave
Climate/ Terrain	Any (Wormcrawl Fissure depths)
Organization	Solitary (1, plus 3d20 skeletons of varying sizes)
Challenge Rating	11
Treasure	None
Alignment	Always chaotic evil
Advancement Range	18-51 (Colossal)

The first ulgurstasta was created ages ago by Kyuss. An ulgurstasta is a nauseating creature that looks like a massive, pale-yellow maggot. Twin rows of dozens of pulpy, rudimentary legs tipped with bony spurs provide it with a surprisingly effective means of locomotion. Its head is studded with dozens of humanoid eyes, below which drools a maw filled with hooked teeth. Its body is covered with millions of distended pores that continually weep a foul-smelling mucus. The beast radiates a cloying stink of rotting flowers and sour milk.

Vague notes surviving from Kyuss's time indicate that the process of creating an ulgurstasta is long and dangerous. The creator first digs a mass grave 100 feet square and 20 feet deep. The grave is filled with dead animal matter, all of which must be infested with various kinds of carnivorous worms. This charnal pit ripens for several days until the putrescence has reached the consistency of soup. The creator then waits for the next new moon, at which time he commands no fewer than twenty undead with the capability to inflict negative levels to enter the pit. A gateway to some unspecified plane of great evil is opened and used to infuse the grave with energy, which instantly causes the undead in the pit to liquefy into the morass. Finally, the creator casts a series of unspecified (and likely forgotten) spells on the contents of the pit; these spells are the key to giving the ulgurstatsta its form and abilities, and certainly require dozens of rare spell components. The newly formed beast has an Intelligence of 1 and is immediately able to create new skeletons. It obeys the vocal commands of its creator and can think for itself only upon reaching an Intelligence score of 10.

The one thing that Kyuss didn't count on was the fact that ulgurstasta retain some of the memories of those they consume. Thus, the more they ate, the more intelligent they grew. By the time Kyuss vanished, most of his ulgurstasta had become at least as intelligent as ghouls. Intelligent enough, in any case, to know that they would be hunted down and destroyed by Kyuss's remaining enemies. Thus, the ulgurstasta retreated deep into the wilderness. Despite their attempt at self-preservation, most of them were hunted down and slain in the coming



years, until only a handful survived deep in the Wormcrawl Fissure. Recently, one or two ulgurstasta have been rumored to surface in isolated areas far from the Wormcrawl (such as in the Pomarj or the Bone March), where the local denizens worship them as gods.

The ulgurstasta is a solitary being and has no desire or need to be around others of its kind. Should two beasts of Kyuss meet, they give each other a wide berth.

As they were created through powerful necromantic magic, these creatures cannot reproduce, nor do they need to breathe or eat. Their orders once drove them to convert living beings into skeletons, but as time wore on, this drive has been replaced by a need to become more intelligent. As a general rule, every thousand skeletons created by an ulgurstasta allows it to retain enough thoughts and memories to gain a point of Intelligence. It is not unlikely that in some forgotten corner of the Wormcrawl, there might lurk an ulgurstasta of genius level or higher; these ulgurstasta might even have mastered the art of Necromancy themselves.

COMBAT

The ulgurstasta have grown much more intelligent over the centuries and behave accordingly. An ulgurstasta attacks with its jaws. These jaws are mounted on a flexible stalk and have a reach of 20 feet.

Improved Grab (Ex): If the ulgurstasta successfully bites a target, it can make a free grapple check without provoking an attack of opportunity. Bite damage is automatic each following round until the victim is freed through a successful opposed Strength or Escape Artist check, or until she is swallowed.

Swallow Whole (Ex): Any Large or smaller creature grabbed by an ulgurstasta is swallowed whole if the beast makes a second successful grapple check. Creatures that are swallowed whole are bathed in the necromantic acid in the ulgurstasta's gut. The gut is AC 16; dealing 25 points of damage to its interior makes a hole big enough for a Medium-size creature to escape. Once the creature exits the gut through such a portal, muscular action closes the hole; if the ulgurstasta swallows another opponent, that creature must cut its own way out. An ulgurstasta can hold a maximum of two Large opponents inside its body. Medium-size creatures count as 1/2 of a Large creature, Small opponents as 1/4 of a Large creature, Tiny opponents as 1/8, and Diminutive opponents as 1/16. Fine creatures are usually dissolved into nutrients in a matter of seconds and don't count against the total.

Necromantic Acid (Su): Someone swallowed by an ulgurstasta is in deep trouble, for these beasts feed on raw life, transforming their victims into animated skeletons that the ulgurstasta can later regurgitate. A swallowed victim suffers 1d8 points of permanent Constitution damage each round from this necromantic acid. Upon death, the victim's remains are infused with the acid and transformed into an animated skeleton. Skeletons remain dormant until the ulgurstasta vomits them up.

Spawn Skeletons (Su): As a full round action, an ulgurstasta can regurgitate the dormant skeletons in its gut. At any one time, an ulgurstasta has 2d4 skeletons of various sizes in its gut. These undead obey the ulgurstasta's mental commands without fail and can function perfectly the round after regurgitation. For 1d6 rounds after being vomited up, these skeletons will be covered with necromantic acid. They deal 1 point of permanent Constitution damage with each successful attack in addition to other damage dealt. Ulgurstasta are always followed by a band of 2d20+10 previously spawned skeletons.

Breath Weapon (Su): In an emergency, an ulgurstasta can regurgitate the contents of its stomach. This results in a cone of necromantic acid 60 feet long. Anyone in its path must make a Reflex saving throw (DC 18) or take 3d6 points of permanent Constitution damage. Those who make the save only suffer 1d6 points of temporary Constitution damage. Victims killed in this manner animate the next round as a skeleton under the ulgurstasta's control. Any dormant skeletons in the ulgurstasta's gut will be vomited up as well. These undead animate at once, attacking everything in sight except the ulgurstasta. Once the ulgurstasta has vomited, it cannot do so again for 24 hours. Creatures swallowed during this period do not take Constitution damage. An ulgurstasta in this situation often tries to flee until it can replenish its supply of necromantic acid.

Tendrils (Ex): The millions of pores on an ulgurstasta's body provide it with a deadly defense; each pore contains a coiled, 40-foot-long, hair-thin tendril. When angered, the tendrils extend to their full range and whip about in a frenzy. This storm of tendrils renders the ulgurstasta immune to small non-magical ranged weapons like arrows and deals 1d12 points of slashing damage per round to any creature in the area of effect. Anyone in this area suffers a -2 situational penalty to attack rolls.

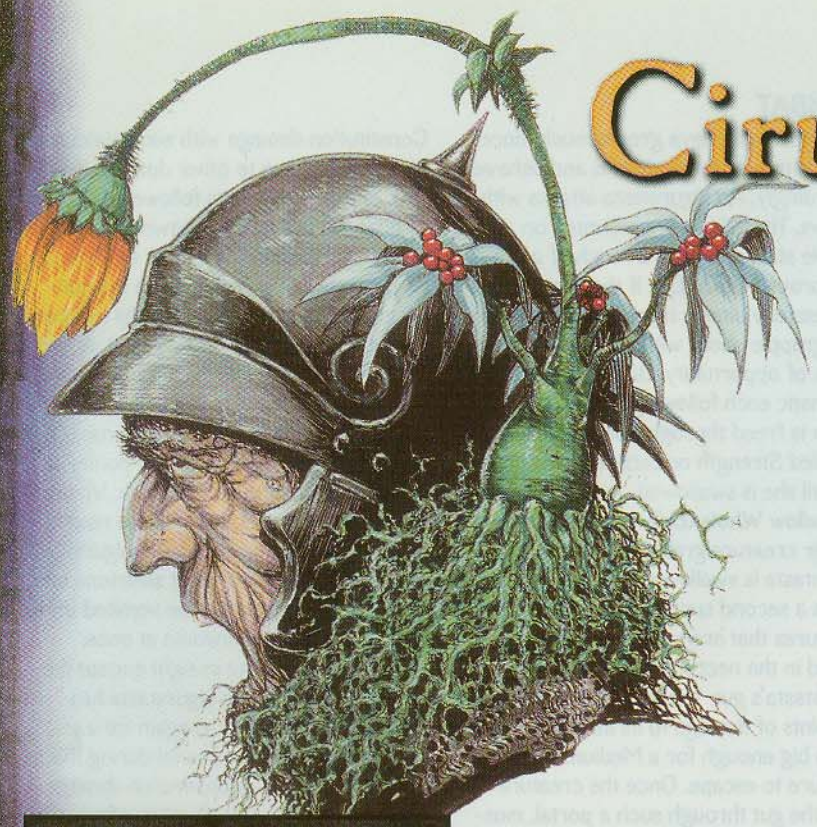
Damage Reduction 25/+3 (Su): The ulgurstasta ignores the first 25 points of damage dealt from weapons of +2 enchantment or less.

Undead: The ulgurstasta is immune to poison, *sleep*, paralyzation, stunning, disease, and necromantic effects. It is also immune to *charms*, compulsions, phantasms, morale effects, and critical hits. Attacks that require a Fortitude save have no effect on an ulgurstasta unless the attack affects objects.

Immunities (Ex): The ulgurstasta is immune to all forms of acid and cold.

Spell Resistance (21) (Ex): Spellcasters must make a successful level check (DC 21) to determine if their spells affect the ulgurstasta. The same is true of creatures attempting to target an ulgurstasta with a spell-like ability.

Ciruja Plant



CIRUJA PLANT

Small Plant

Hit Dice	3d8+9 (22 hp)
Initiative	+2 (Dex
Speed	5 ft., Climb 5 ft.
AC	13 (+2 Dex, +1 Size)
Attacks	2 fronds -2 melee, sphereroid +4 ranged
Damage	Frond 1d3
Face/Reach	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks	Poison gas, aging
Special Qualities	Plant immunities, tremorsense
Saves	Fort +6, Ref +3, Will -3
Abilities	Str 10, Dex 14, Con 16, Int —, Wis 2, Cha 1
Feats	Iron Will, Multi-attack
Climate/ Terrain	Temperate mountains (Wormcrawl Fissure heights)
Organization	Solitary or Patches (1d6)
Challenge Rating	3
Treasure	None (see below)
Alignment	Always neutral
Advancement Range	4-6 HD (Medium-size) 7-9 HD (Large)

The ciruja plant is a hardy species that grows on the narrow ledges high on the Wormcrawl cliffs. The plant's root system is completely above ground and consists of a fibrous mass of thick tendrils that allow it to cling to sheer surfaces with ease. These roots give it a limited form of movement as well. The main body of the plant consists of a cluster of narrow, triangular fronds that grow to about a foot off the ground. Bright red berries and small blue and white flowers are scattered throughout these fronds. When the ciruja senses food, a tall central stalk rises to a height of about 3 feet above these fronds. This stalk is topped by a bright orange and yellow flower.

Despite its beautiful appearance, the ciruja plant is one of the most dangerous threats of the Wormcrawl Fissure, for it feeds on other creatures' youth. The process by which the ciruja plant causes organic matter to age rapidly has baffled the greatest minds of Greyhawk for ages. More than one sage has died of premature old age while studying a captured ciruja plant.

Though ciruja plants do not carry treasure with them, there is a 10% chance that an encountered plant will have just finished a meal, leaving behind the inorganic "waste" carried by its prey. In this case, consider the ciruja plant to have a treasure rating of Standard.

COMBAT

A ciruja plant can defend itself from melee attacks by lashing about with up to two of its sharp leafy fronds. This is an attack of last resort, however; it relies on its central stalk to subdue its prey.

Poison Gas (Ex): Once prey is detected, the ciruja's central stalk extends outward and expels a small spheroid at the target. This is the ciruja's primary attack, and it is treated as a +4 ranged touch attack with a range increment of 10 feet. When the spheroid strikes a solid surface, it explodes into a cloud of pale yellow gas that fills a 5-foot diameter circle. Living creatures that come in contact with this gas must make a Fortitude save (DC 14) or be paralyzed for 3d6 minutes. A ciruja generally has eight spheroids available to launch at a time. Expended spheroids regrow in 24 hours. It is possible to harvest these spheroids for use as grenade-like weapons with a successful Disable Device check (DC 25). Harvested spheroids remain potent for 6 hours.

Aging (Su): Once the ciruja has paralyzed a victim, its roots go to work. They burrow into the dermal tissue of the victim in the space of a single round. Each point of Armor Class above 10 possessed by the victim increases this time by 1 round. Once the roots are attached, the ciruja feeds on the victim's youth. Each round that passes, the victim ages 1d10 years. This has no positive benefits for the victim; a creature who might grow more powerful with age does not benefit as if it had lived those years. Once the victim reaches maximum age, it dies. Should a victim survive long enough to awaken, the ciruja fires another gas sphere. The ciruja's roots consume everything organic; even bones quickly turn to dust. The only remains are any inorganic items carried by the victim.

Plant Immunities (Ex): The ciruja is immune to poison, *sleep*, paralyzation, stunning, and polymorphing. It is not subject to critical hits and is immune to mind-influencing effects.

Tremorsense (Ex): The ciruja plant can automatically sense the location of anything in contact with the ground within 60 feet of its body.

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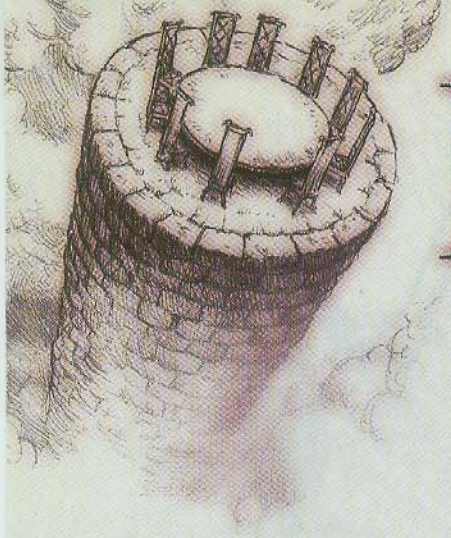

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Question of the Month

How do you handle off-topic chat during your gaming sessions?

Hope You're Happy

When I saw the issue #274 of the revamped *Dragon Magazine* in the mailbox, I was ecstatic. I'd been just as curious about the magazine's changes as the next guy, and I was eager to take a look. So I brought it inside, tore open the plastic covering, and immediately flipped through the pages, scanning the articles for general content and taking a good look at the new layout.

After spending about 2 minutes looking at the magazine, I closed it, put it down, and refused to open it for the rest of the day.

I was nervous. To tell you the truth, I was very, very scared. You see, I don't play Dungeons & Dragons. I haven't played D&D since my early days of junior high. I've spent years cultivating and developing my own gaming system, one that was drastically superior to 2nd Edition on so many levels. I'd completely planned and written two sourcebooks that would serve as the "core rules" of my gaming system. Now, taken from my mailbox, was a threat. That threat was housed in the pages of *Dragon Magazine*, issue #274. Within it were articles on the much dreaded new edition of Dungeons & Dragons. I knew my baby, my very own roleplaying game, was being threatened with replacement.

My gaming system was my own. It was used solely by my gaming group, fully known only by me. Aside from my sourcebooks, I owned many 2nd Edition handbooks, mainly for use as a reference point on approaching various rules systems. I kept the handbooks around because a paid staff of designers could design more and design faster than I could, and D&D rule-systems were good in a pinch when I wasn't fully prepared. I was confident that nothing Wizards of the Coast put out would compete with my beloved gaming system.

Well, I was wrong.

The next day, I opened issue #274 and read the majority of it, skipping over the Sherwood articles temporarily while I examined exactly what the new edition had to offer. My stomach tightened when I realized that my gaming system would no longer exist. In short, it occurred to me that one man cannot compare to a team of designers and close to six hundred playtesters. The designers knew their business; the playtesters knew their gaming.

Long ago, I had looked at the "Countdown to 3rd Edition" articles and scoffed. It looked so foolish because I wanted it to look foolish. I needed that, if I was going to continue developing my game. Today, though, I called my local gaming store and had them reserve me a copy of the new *Player's Handbook* as soon as the first shipment arrived. I am no longer a Game Master with his own system; I am now a Dungeon Master with a sheaf of house rules buried somewhere in his closet. While the change saddened me at first, I know it's for the best. After all, ten years and millions of gamers have all contributed to the new edition one way or another, and who am I to object to the finest roleplaying game of all time?

Believe it or not, I'm a fully dedicated D&D gamer now. The new edition is too good for me to stubbornly hold onto my own creation. Though my system will always be around as that once grand game my friends and I used to play, from now on the new edition of Dungeons & Dragons will be the focal point of our marathon gaming sessions—all because of *Dragon Magazine* issue #274.

Bravo. I hope you're happy.

Jeffrey Gerretse • Riverside, CA

Everything Old

After reading the Conversion Manual, I have my first serious problem with the new edition, though it is in fact the simplest change. Why all the needless terminology changes? I know that the *Conversion Manual* says that many such changes now better reflect the overall use of an ability or effect of a spell, but I still don't see why it was needed. We already have to learn an entire new system, why make us learn new names for the same abilities? Even if some of them are modified from their 2nd Edition effects, many of them seem to be changed just for the sake of changing them! Such as changing *hold undead* to *halt undead*. What was the point of that? Animal Handling to Handle Animal. Totally unnecessary. I know it's a little thing, but change for its own sake just makes things more complicated.

The changes to the spells are actually what I hate the most. Such as *monster summoning* to *summon monster*, *locate animal* to *detect animal*, *free action* to *freedom of movement* (perhaps my least favorite), *detect lie* to *discern lies*, the list goes on and on. I will grant you that some of the new ones do sound cooler, like *inflict wounds*, and some might describe the spell more precisely, like *summon invisible stalker* and *control*

water, but to many it seems the change was not necessary. Not only will we veteran players have to learn a new system but also learn new terminology for old stuff—names firmly engraved in our memory since at least 1st Edition AD&D. Now not only do I have to look up any spell I want to cast to see if its effect has been modified, but I first have to check the *Conversion Manual* to see if I'm looking in the right place. It might have been easy for you guys to learn them since you made them up, but I would guess that most of us don't have time to memorize this stuff before the new edition's release date. Again, some of them might better explain the overall use of a spell, and that's fine, but too many just are totally unnecessary.

I would also like to know the reasoning behind some of the magic item changes. Why so many staves, wands, and rods changing around? I don't see many characters running around that specialize in the rod, but I do see bards and rangers who are deadly with a quarterstaff, and those staves gave them a deadly magic item to use.

On a more positive note, the artwork in the conversion manual is absolutely amazing, and if that's the actual cover of the *Player's Handbook* on the back, *wow!*

Mark Anthony Sims • Pittsburgh, PA

Fate of the Industry

In Gary Gygax's July (#273) column "D&D: The Next Generation" he discusses the very real problem of attracting new people, mostly young, into the declining RPG hobby in general, and to D&D in particular. He attributes this disturbing state of affairs partly to collector card games, but also to two other causes: overly complex RPG offerings and because we old farts insult the newbies with cries of munchkinism. With all due respect to Gary, I must strongly disagree with him on those latter two points.

Was 2nd Edition AD&D more complex than 1st Edition AD&D? Nope. If you add together the pages for the *Player's Handbook* and *Dungeon Master's Guides* (since things were distributed a bit differently in 2nd Edition), there is not a significant difference (especially when you take into account the later's increase in graphics, font size, and spell numbers). In fact, 2nd Edition decreased the complexity that built up during the life of 1st Edition (though it later developed its own complexity of supplemental material). There was also little real change in the rules.

So, the old gamers are to blame? Hogwash! The problem is getting people to play. If they are munchkins, they are already playing! We've already won the battle. Unless people are playing in conventions (the vast minority), groups are self contained and rarely interact with others. They play in whatever style they prefer and could not care less what others say, especially online (where the cry of the munchkin is most often made).

When I began gaming in 1980, I learned about D&D by word of mouth, as did most of the people I knew at the time. Back then, if someone was interested in multiperson games at all, there were not many choices. There were board games and there was D&D. In such an atmosphere with little competition, word of mouth works just fine. But now, in the year 2000, the gaming world is very different. Computer games (non-existent back then, and really only recently multiplayer, with the advent of *Doom* in 1993) and CCGs are easy to learn, interactive in nature, extremely varied in style (literally hundreds of choices), and cheap to get started in (if you already have a computer). In a visual world, they have immediate appeal. The **Magic: The Gathering** trading card game benefitted greatly from "word of mouth" because of its novelty, but now that it is no longer new, and with the flood of copycat CCGs, the number of new players is dropping dramatically. **Pokémon** started a new market as collector cards for young children, but few actually play, and RPGs will never appeal to such young folk no matter how simplified the rules are.

So how do we save our beloved hobby in today's market? Three famous words: advertise, advertise, advertise! In my twenty years of gaming I have never seen an advertisement for D&D in any forum that wasn't directed to people already in the hobby. This esteemed publication, for example, is only read by people already interested in RPGs. This is not attracting new people, and it is my belief that this is the single most important cause for the dramatic downward slide of RPGs against other forms of gaming.

Well, I should have said "never in my twenty years ... until last week." When I opened the *Diablo II* box, low and behold, a detailed pamphlet about D&D! Am I interested in changing over from Greyhawk to the world of *Diablo II* (or Dominaria, if a **Magic: The Gathering** cross-over product becomes reality)? Nope. But do I think it will benefit the RPG hobby by attracting new people?

We old farts insult the newbies with cries of munchkinism.

You better believe it! I applaud the introduction of these products. With the coming D&D movie, the industry has an unprecedented opportunity to "spread the word" about the hobby. I surely hope Wizards of the Coast doesn't drop the ball on this. The fate of the industry depends on it.

Denis "Maldin" Tetreault • London, Ontario

Knee-jerk Deletion

I would like to offer my views on a subject that occurs regularly within the pages of "Forum": players and DMs who are unwilling or unable to use something, assume that they are on the same ground as everyone else, and state that the rule, class, or whatever is useless and should be removed from the game since, frankly, no one uses it anyway. While I have no problem with having people explain their views or why they play a certain way, I've had it with complaining.

One prime example of this is the demand by several gamers to remove the gnome and halfling. Scott Roberts in particular expressed an enormous dislike for these races, claiming they are "uninteresting, annoying, unadventurous, pathetic, and unplayable." These accusations fall under the same category as Lance Goetz's useless rogues and Dennis Rose's weenie wizards. The problem is with the way the game is run, not the way the classes (or races) are set up. Gnomes and halflings are very enjoyable characters to play if they are played correctly and if the DM creates situations in which they can be played correctly. True, these races seem weak and underpowered, but all it

takes is a look at *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* to see that there is more to D&D's diminutive races than meets the eye.

Part of the beauty of D&D is the ability to customize it to your liking. The rules are not always going to be exactly the way you want them to be. Yes, perhaps no one in your group plays an X character, but that doesn't mean that no one in someone else's group does. If you find a needless rule, don't use it or make up one that you feel works better—don't demand that it should be removed altogether. Different people have different playing styles. I know that "if you don't like it change it" has been a battle cry of countless gamers over the years, but some people just don't seem to catch on. The rules are not presented because everyone will use everything, but because everyone will use some.

Joseph Larkin • Black River Falls, WI

Question of the Month

Regarding the "Question of the Month" in issue #273, which asks what kinds of plots work best in my campaign, I can only answer this way:

The character-based ones.

As a gamemaster, I have long ago determined that those stories that involve the characters' histories, desires, and personalities are those that not only work best but also play out in the most exciting way. My formula, as it were, is this: make story hooks out of the characters' histories, and so on, add a few plot twists, and slap the whole thing together for years of gamin' hoo-hah!

Take, for instance, my long-running STAR WARS campaign. Three main characters alone have provided grist for my GM mill for well over two years!

If it's not the smuggler's history with Jabba the Hutt and other gangsters, it's his constant quest to make deals, acquire gadgets, and win swoop races. Perhaps I'll build a story about the young senatorial-turned-purple-haired-swoop-racer rescuing her estranged father, or picking up her diplomatic reigns to unite whole sectors against the Empire—not to mention her racing rivalry with the smuggler mentioned above. The pilot/Jedi trainee's ex-girlfriend (from the Imperial academy, you know) provided a powerful and haunting nemesis for the better part of the campaign! This, of course, on top of our pilot's Jedi training with a master who, after months and months of teaching, betrayed him.

The key in my campaign, then, is character above all else. Oh, sure, we go around whackin' the miscellaneous fluids outta Stormtroopers, gangster thugs, pointy monsters, and all of that, but the plots almost always hinge around a character's background, desires, or personality. In those cases when the story is broader than that, the subplots always indulge my character-centric GMing style.

After all, you don't make movies about buildings and meadows. You wanna watch a bridge for two hours? I don't. Put some interesting people on that bridge, and I'll watch.

Location-based scenarios? You mean, like dungeons or somethin'? Naaaaw, I just use those as backdrops for Lightsaber-swinging, swoop-racing, father-rescuing, Empire-smashing derring-do.

I did have a catacomb once, though. It was full of Sith stuff. It was creepy. Cool adventure, that one.

Andrew "Dr. Rotwang" Reyes • Bloomington, IN

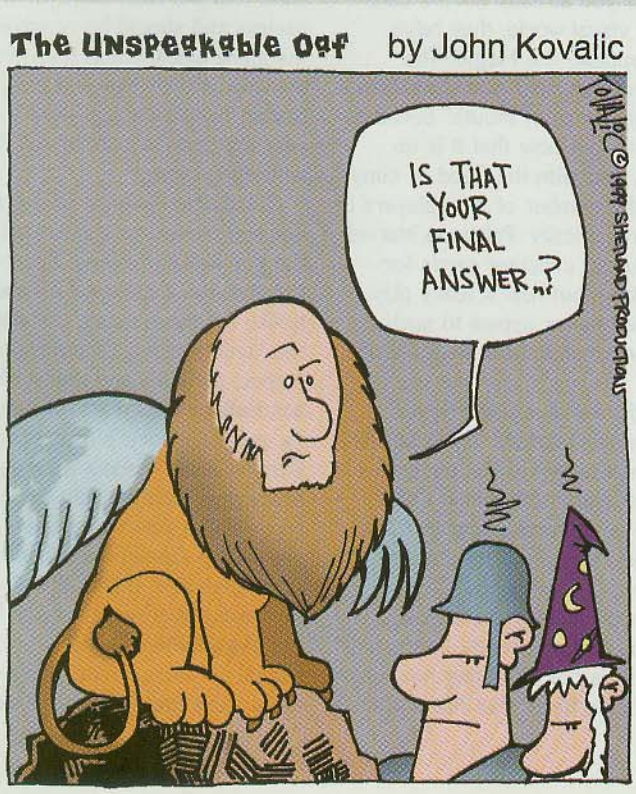
Off Color

And I quote: "White, black, green, blue, and red ... These colors run the length of each neck and into the forepart of the body as stripes, gradually blending to three stripes of gray, blue-green, and purple over her back and hindquarters, and merging into a muddy dark brown tail. Her underbelly and legs are greenish white fading into her upper body colors." (*ADVANCED DUNGEON & DRAGONS: Monstrous Manual*, entry: Chromatic Dragon (Tiamat), p. 32.)

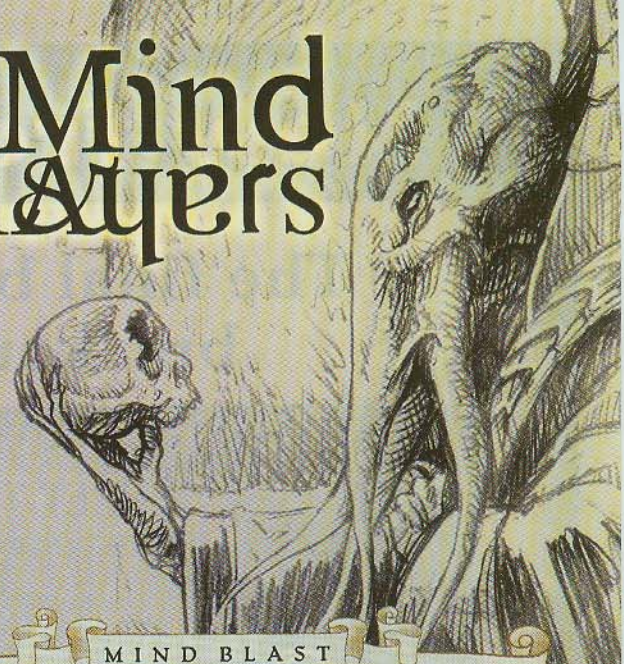
Mr. Darlington is remembering the color pattern that Tiamat had in the DUNGEON & DRAGONS animated TV series. Unless it's a typo, even his memory fails him in that the "left to right" order that he gave is actually "right to left" as you would go face-to-face with the Old Lady herself. (I still have the action figure from the cartoon show. That's how I know.)

But wait ... These stats and concept of Tiamat are for the new edition. A new look. A fresh feel. A whole new attitude! Do we need to nitpick about something like this!? I personally think Carl Critchlow's vision of Tiamat is spectacular. Being a goddess, I can picture Tiamat's colors flowing over her as she flies overhead. This might even go as far as believing that maybe Tiamat is able to consciously choose the color pattern of her heads—she is a goddess after all.

David R. Boruch • Pittsburgh, PA



Mind flayers



no. 16 SOLUTION

M	R	E	K	E	E	S	R	A	E	B	G	U	B	A	L	O	R	C
I	E	G	N	O	L	L	E	R	G	O	D	K	N	I	L	B	O	G
T	K	R	Y	T	A	S	D	T	E	E	H	S	N	A	B	R	P	O
E	R	I	Y	A	S	L	L	I	H	P	S	P	I	E	R	C	E	R
I	U	T	P	R	T	A	O	S	U	G	P	A	M	E	O	I	R	B
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MONSTER LIST

ALGOID	DRIDER	LURKER	ROPER
ANNIS	EAR SEEKER	MITE	SAHUAGIN
APE	ELF	NAGA	SATYR
ARGOS	GHAST	NEOGI	SEA HAG
ATOMIE	GHOST	NIXIE	SHEDU
BALOR	GNOLL	NYMPH	SIRINE
BANSHEE	GNOME	OGRE	SKELETON
BEHOLDER	GOBLIN	ORC	SLAAD
BLINK DOG	GOLEM	PECH	SPIDER
BOAR	GORBEL	PERYTON	STIRGE
BROWNIE	GRELL	PHOENIX	TRAPPER
BUGBEAR	GRIG	PIERCER	URD
CHIMERA	HARPY	QUASIT	WEMIC
DAO	HYDRA	RAKSHASA	WHALE
DERRO	LAMIA	RAT	WIGHT
DRAGON	LAMMASU	ROC	YETI

MIND BLAST

There is a D&D creature with a two-word name. Take away from the first word all the letters in the second word (though not in the same order), and you're left with URDI. What creature is it?

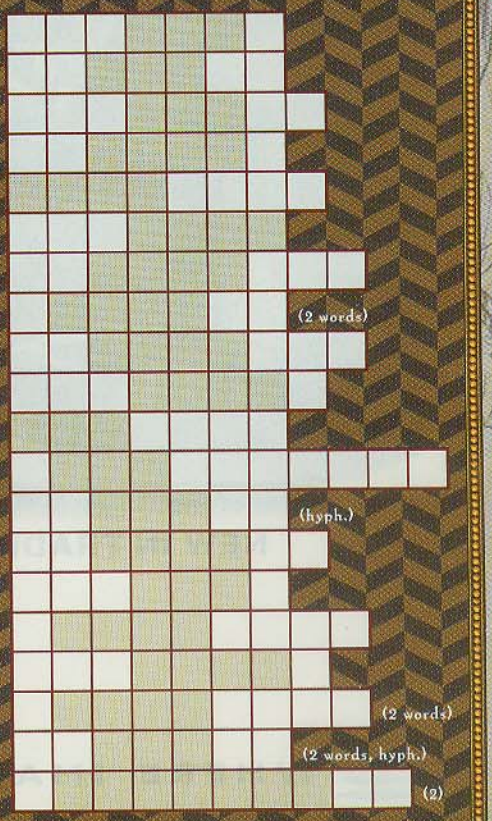
You can find the solution to this *MIND BLAST* on page 101.

no. 17

by Mike Selinker

Time to do some divine addition. Put a clue answer in the unshaded squares, add the name of a deity in the shaded squares, and you'll end up with a new word (defined after the equals sign).

1.	Really	+	A Norse deity	=	Write poetry
2.	Dogs and Cats, e.g.	+	A Babylonian deity	=	Schulz cartoon
3.	Cut seeds from	+	An Egyptian deity	=	In a binding undergarment
4.	Gladiator's weapon	+	A Greek deity	=	Most close
5.	Charged particles	+	An Egyptian deity	=	Fortified places
6.	Get a victory	+	A Norse deity	=	Host Oprah
7.	Stick like glue	+	A Roman deity	=	Making a din
8.	Canning metal	+	A Greek deity	=	What to go "Singin' in"
9.	Turn away	+	An Indian deity	=	2.64 gallons
10.	Comedienne Goldie	+	A Norse deity	=	Plant of the rose family
11.	Nagging pain	+	A Greek deity	=	Flair
12.	Acting lazy	+	A Norse deity	=	Thorough beating
13.	Dog's brood	+	An Egyptian deity	=	Exercises
14.	Gives help	+	A Greek deity	=	Bubblebrains
15.	#4's diety, in Rome	+	A Norse deity	=	They die for causes
16.	In due time	+	A Roman deity	=	Boeing's field
17.	Beat with a whip	+	A Norse deity	=	Shoreline danger
18.	Many are 10 feet long	+	A Celtic deity	=	What stoppers do
19.	Norse deity of fate	+	A Sumerian deity	=	Traffic sign
20.	Box for coal	+	An Egyptian deity AND an Indian deity	=	Loss of smart staffers



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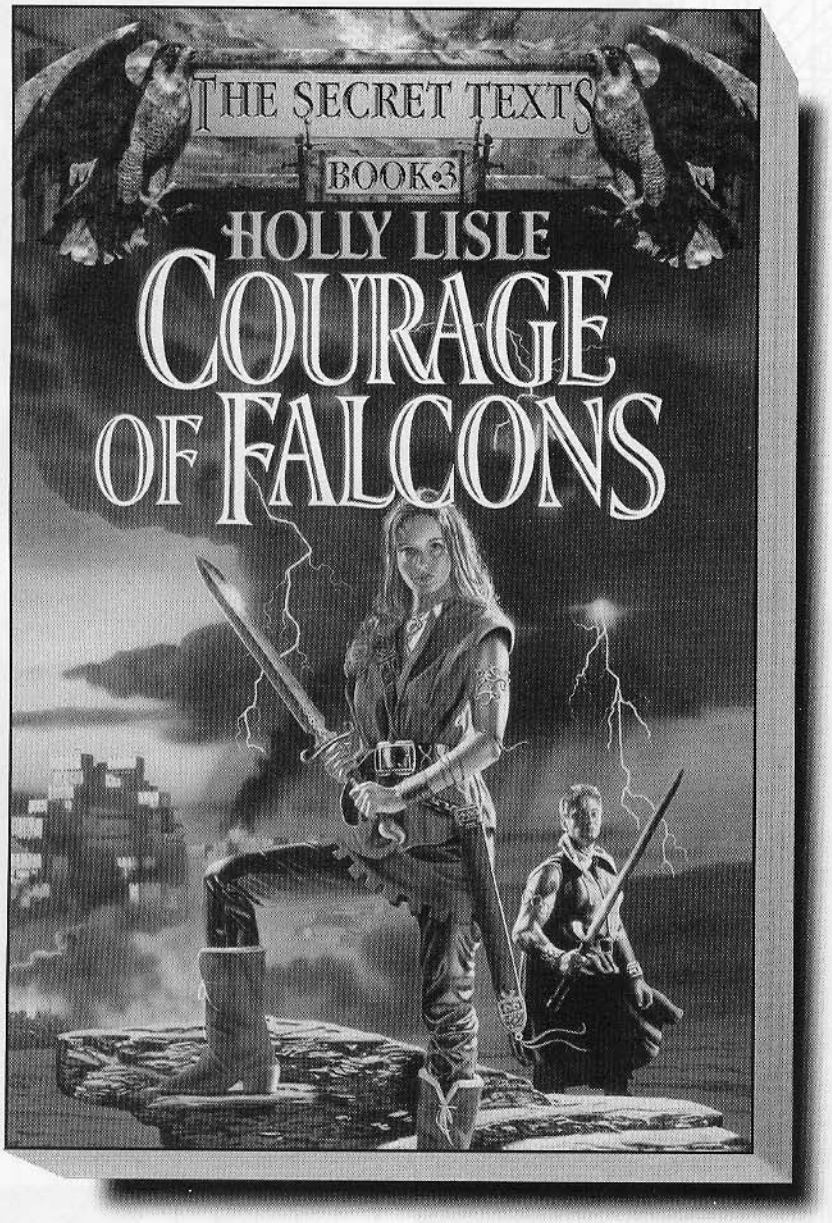

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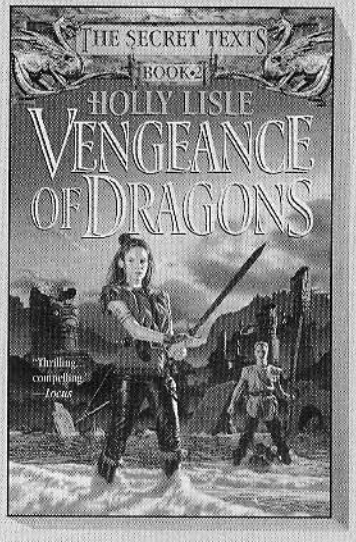

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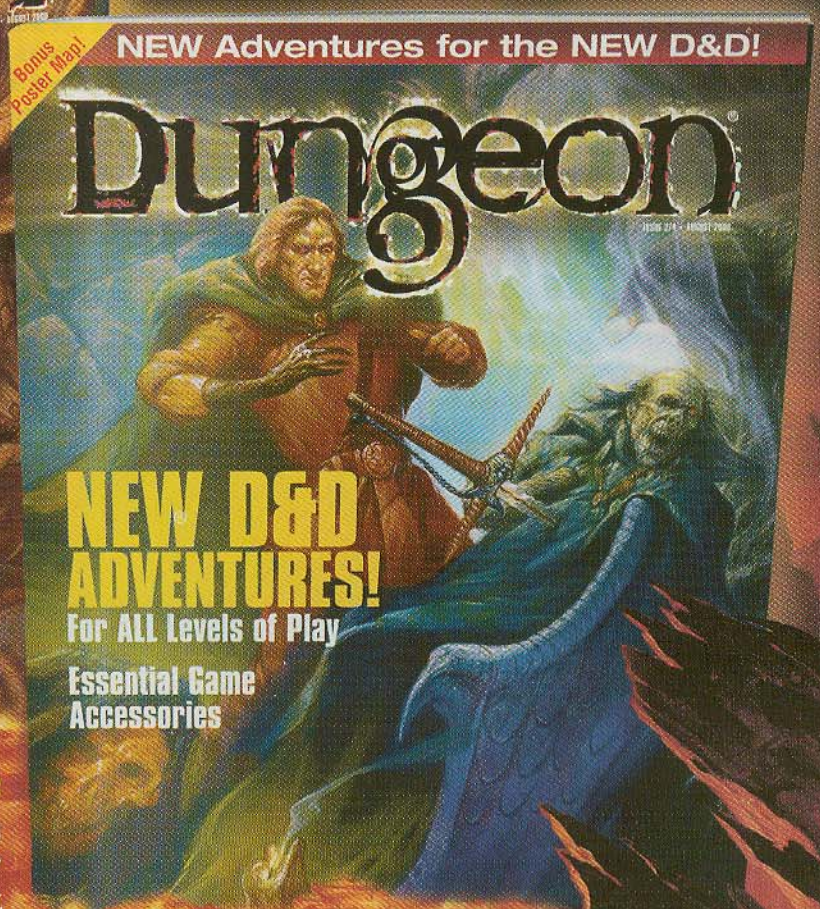

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role models

Cover Me, I'm Going In!

by Chris Pramas • photography by Craig Cudnohufsky

Any experienced DM will tell you that players always try to interpret rules to their benefit. It's a natural enough impulse, and some aspects of the D&D rules invite abuse. The rules for cover loom large in this category, since they are up to the DM to judge. Players might argue about how their characters deserve nine-tenths cover because they're positioned "just so." You can cut such arguments short by using miniatures and appropriate terrain.

It's best if each player is responsible for moving his own miniature. By making positioning a player responsibility, you put the onus on them. If they don't want to be in front of an orc archer, they shouldn't put their figures there!

Cover and its effects are described on pages 132-133 of the *Player's Handbook*. Basically, PCs can gain a bonus to AC of +1 to +10 depending on the amount of cover they enjoy. Adjudicating the amount of cover is the tricky part, and this is where miniatures can really help. You don't need to rely on vague descriptions of the players' locations when you can see them clearly on the tabletop.

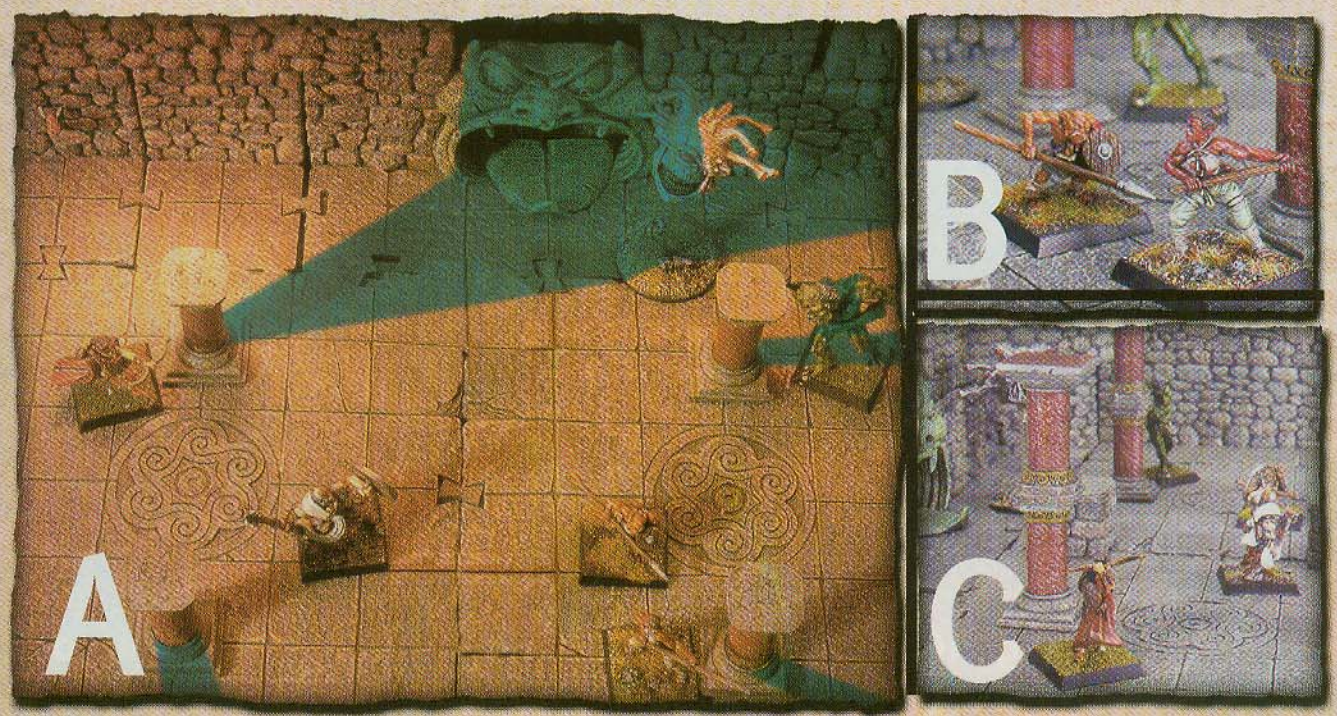
Miniatures work better if you're using good terrain. The more precise your terrain, the easier it'll be to address issues of position. There are several companies that make good dungeon dressing, and we've used Dwarven Forge products in the photos for this article. It's also pretty easy to make your own. (See the sidebar.)

If you look at the pictures accompanying this article, you'll see a small band of adventurers tangling with a beholder, a troll, and a goblin. It only takes a quick glance to size up the tactical position and see who is taking advantage of cover in this dungeon. The cleric in the foreground has no cover at all. However, he does have a clear line of sight to both the beholder and the troll, which will aid him with many spells.

The bow-armed paladin is behind a pillar, which grants her half-cover (+4 to AC and +2 to Reflex saving throws). If you take a look at picture C, you'll see her point of view. The pillar that covers her also blocks most of the beholder from view. She can see some eyestalks and a little bit of body, but that eye tyrant is going to benefit from three-quarters cover (+7 to AC and +3 to his Reflex saving throws). She can also see the troll, but once again there is a pillar between her and her target. However, the troll is exposed enough that he's only going to gain half-cover, so the paladin has a better shot.

The monk is engaged with the goblin. This could actually help her in the right

A *In this diagram you can see how the beholder is only partially visible while the troll is only half covered.*
B *Well-painted miniatures can add drama and excitement to any combat encounter.*
C *Looking over the archer's shoulder is the easiest way to determine what she can see.*



circumstances. For instance, if a *fireball* went off behind the goblin, the monk would gain one-quarter cover from her foe! This provides a +1 bonus to her Reflex saving throw that might make all the difference.

Exploiting cover makes a great deal of tactical sense for both players and their opponents. You should try to remember the rules for kneeling and going prone, as these can help you use cover to your best advantage. To represent going prone, put the miniature on its side. A die or other marker can be placed next to kneeling figures.

With a little preparation and a good eye, you can stop most arguments about cover before they start. Once your players get comfortable with the new rules and with using miniatures in this way, they should come to appreciate the new tools at their disposal. Position is always important in combat; with miniatures and a good set-up, you can encourage good tactics while adding a great visual element to the game.

Making Simple Terrain

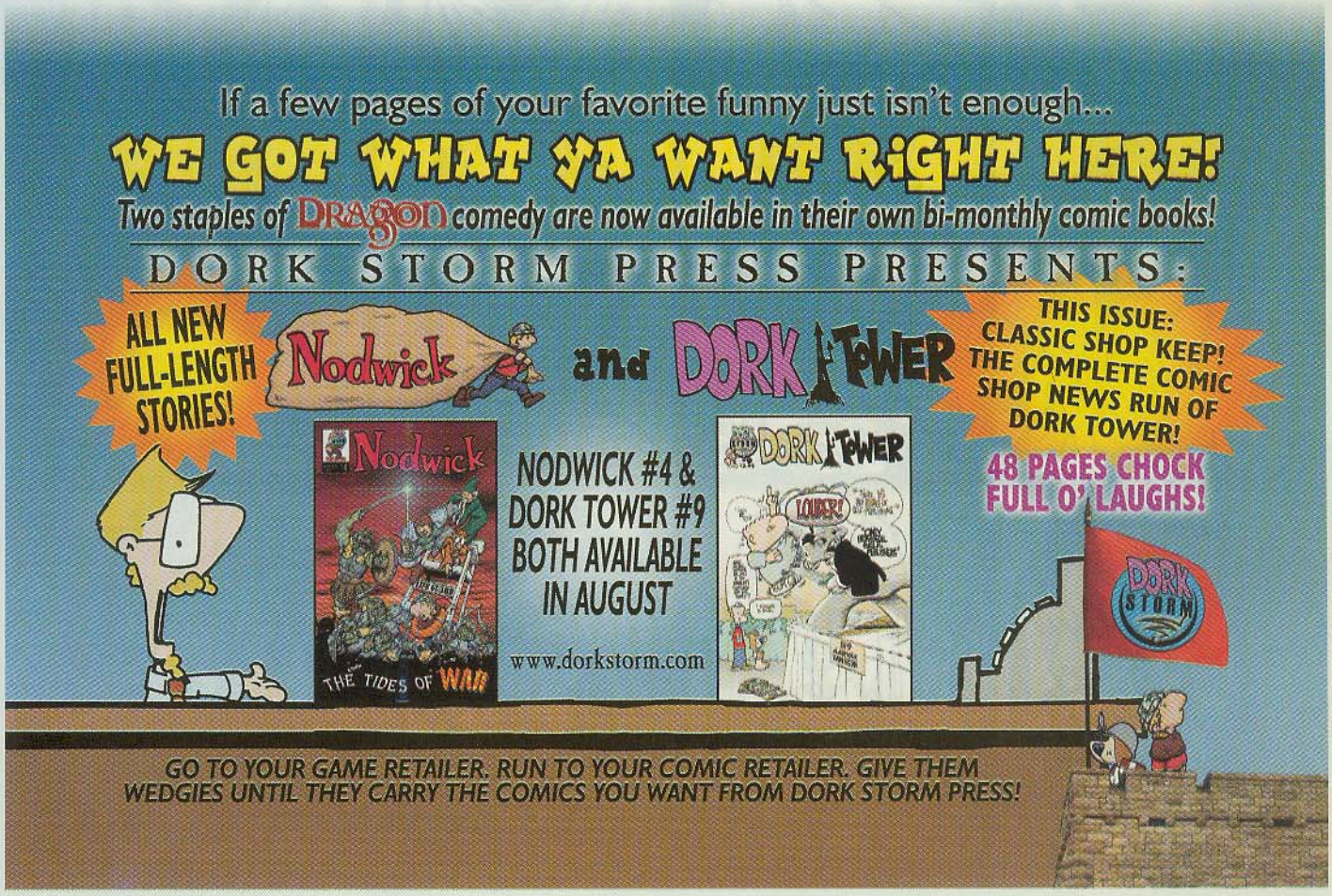
The tips in this article rely on the use of accurate terrain. If you are using a mug to represent a boulder, adjudicating cover issues becomes more challenging. Making basic terrain is pretty easy though. All you need is some styrofoam, a hobby knife, and some craft paints.

First, realize that you won't be sculpting castles your first day. Start with something simple, like a boulder or a low wall. Styrofoam is well suited for this low-tech approach. Take the knife and cut out your desired wall shape. Make sure to cut away areas that look too man-made. You can roughen patches by scraping the knife across the surface. This makes the styrofoam look more like actual rock, a fact you'll bring out even more during the painting process.

Water-based craft paints are best for these types of jobs because they don't react with the styrofoam. Once you've got your basic wall shape, undercoat the whole piece in black paint and let it dry. Next, choose a shade of gray and drybrush the entire surface.

Drybrushing is a very handy technique in which you wipe most of the paint off the brush and then lightly run it across the surface you are painting. This leaves paint on the raised areas, but keeps the base color in the recesses. When you are done, you have a nicely shaded boulder or wall.

Answer to Mind Blast: GUARDIAN NAGA.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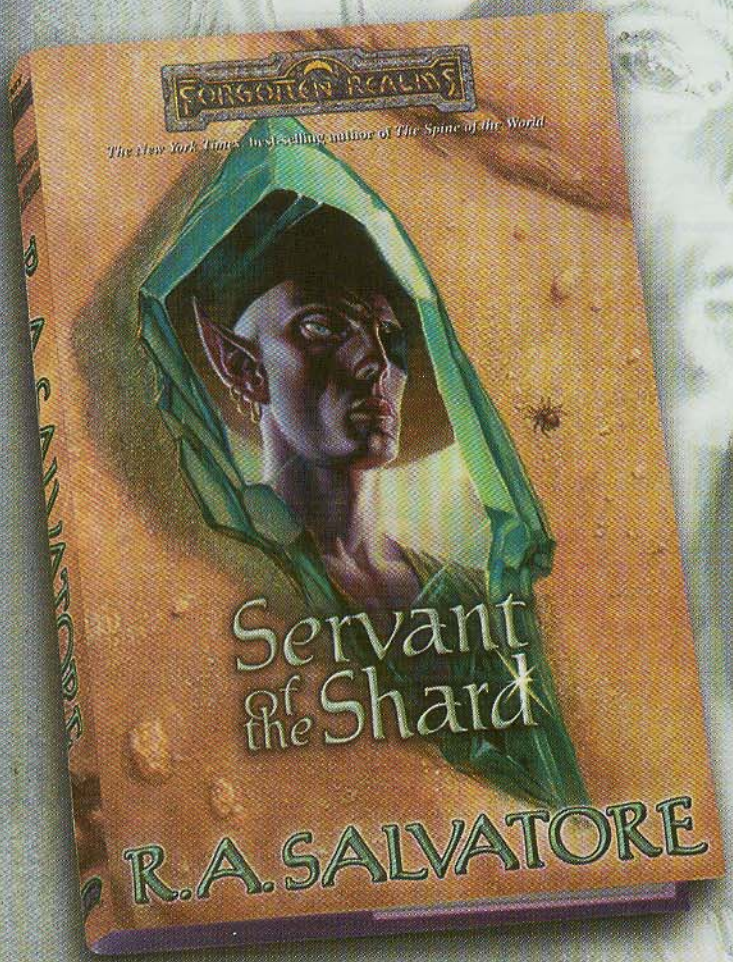

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by skip Williams
thesage@wizards.com

This month, the Sage considers some of the ins and outs of combat in the D&D game, then takes a look at some spells and magical effects.

If you successfully trip an opponent during an overrun, do you get a free attack if you have the Improved Trip feat?

No. The Improved Trip feat gives you a free attack only if you use a melee attack to trip a foe and you succeed. (In effect, this feat replaces the attack you used to make the trip with an attack that can deal damage.) When you're overrunning, you're making a trip as part of the move portion of a charge, not as a melee attack. You can, however, end your charge and use your normal attack against an opponent you've knocked down during an overrun.

What, exactly, is a bard's countersong effective against? Will it work on effects that don't allow saving throws? Will it work against a thunderstone?

Countersong works on sonic magical effects; that is, any spell, supernatural ability, or spell-like effect that has the sonic or language-dependent designator. But countersong does not work against extraordinary abilities and nonmagical sound, such as a thunderstone.

Since countersong allows you to use the bard's Perform check result as your saving throw result, it is not effective against spells or effects that have no saving throw to begin with.

Do you need to be able to hear a bard's countersong to benefit from it?

No, you have to be within 30 feet of the bard (the countersong follows the rules for a spread) and be subjected to an effect that the countersong can counter. (See previous question.) Note that if you're deafened, you probably aren't subject to anything the countersong can counter.

Do I have to roll three times when attacking with three shuriken, or just once? If I have to roll three times, are there penalties on the second and third attacks? If I only have to roll once, is there any reason why I would throw fewer than three shuriken?

When you throw three shuriken, make a separate attack roll for each, even though it counts as one attack. There's no attack penalty for the extra two shuriken.

I don't see any limit on the number of sneak attacks a rogue can make in a round. Suppose a high-level rogue is hiding. Two villains walk within 5 feet of her. Can the rogue use an attack of opportunity as a sneak attack and then, assuming she beats the villain's initiative, make as many sneak attacks as she has attacks? Can she sneak attack each of the villains? What if the rogue has a bow? If she has Rapid Shot, does this increase the number of sneak attacks she can make?

POWERPLAY

BY SEAN K REYNOLDS

A WIZARD BORN FOR MELEE

Wizard: A human wizard with 18 Constitution and two Toughness feats starts with 14 hit points. With 4 ranks of Concentration, a suit of studded leather armor, and a *shield* spell, she has at least AC 20 (+3 armor, +7 cover) and a +9 to her Concentration checks to cast spells in combat without provoking attacks of opportunity (and only a 15% chance of arcane spell failure), making her a decent weapon or spell combatant. With 100 gp in her pocket, she can get a toad familiar, adding +2 to her Constitution and +1 to her hit points and Concentration rolls.

A rogue deals extra damage with a sneak attack any time the target is denied Dexterity bonus to AC or anytime the rogue flanks the target, no matter how many attacks the rogue makes. These conditions are not likely to occur during an attack of opportunity, but, if they do (such as when the rogue is unseen), the rogue gets her sneak attack bonus damage. The same holds true for ranged weapons (but see the next question), provided that the rogue is within 30 feet of her target. Note that sneak attacks are never possible when the rogue cannot see her target.

Can a rogue sneak attack with three shuriken if he is within 30 feet of a target? If each hits, does each gain the sneak attack bonus?

You apply sneak attack damage only once per attack. If you use one attack to throw three shuriken, you get to apply sneak attack bonus damage only once. Sneak attack damage—and a ranger's favored enemy bonus damage—applies only to one of three shuriken that you throw. You do not have enough precision with the extra shuriken to get bonus sneak attack or favored enemy damage.

Mighty bows give a Strength bonus to damage, but what happens when a character with insufficient Strength tries to use one? Can the character use the bow without a damage bonus? Can the character even draw the bow? What about stringing the bow? Can a person without sufficient Strength to use a mighty bow even string it?

For any bow damage, you apply either your Strength modifier or the bow's maximum Strength, whichever is lower. Anyone can string or use a mighty bow, regardless of Strength.

DMs who recall the tale of Ulysses vs. Penelope's suitors might wish to implement a house rule that limits a weak character's ability to string or fire a mighty bow, but there is no official rule that keeps weak characters from stringing or using one.

YOU CAN'T SEE ME, I'M A VAMP–ER, A HALFLING

Rogue: A halfling rogue with 20 Dexterity, 4 ranks of Hide, and the Skill Focus (Hide) feat has a +15 Hide check (+5 Dex, +4 size, +4 ranks, +2 feat), and with 4 ranks of Move Silently she has a +11 Move Silently check (+5 Dex, +2 race, +4 ranks), making it much easier for her to make a sneak attack. With 4 ranks in Climb, Jump, and Listen, she starts with a +6 bonus in each of those skills (+2 race, +4 ranks) before any ability score modifiers.

If I have Martial Weapon Proficiency, Weapon Focus, or Weapon Specialization with a longbow, can I also use a composite longbow?

Officially, any weapon that gets its own entry in Table 7–4: Weapons in the *Player's Handbook* requires a separate proficiency, focus, or specialization. For example, the game has four kinds of bows: shortbows, composite shortbows, longbows, and composite longbows. Individual DMs might want to experiment with weapon groups, but such house rules are appropriate only for proficiency, not focus or specialization.

Is it possible to prepare a partial charge, move, turn, and then execute the charge? Do I get a 5-foot step in between my move and my charge? Can I squeeze an extra 5 feet of movement out of each round by moving as a partial action, then taking a 5-foot step and attacking as a partial action? Can I move and ready an attack, and then take a 5-foot step before that attack? If I don't move at all when I ready my attack, can I take a 5-foot step before or after that attack?

You can make a 5-foot step if you don't otherwise move. In all the cases you mention, the answer is no.

When you charge, all your movement must be in a straight line (and in the same direction), any movement you make before a partial charge counts against you.

As with a charge, the movement you make as part of the ready standard action counts normally as part of your action. In this case, it prevents you from taking the 5-foot step, which you can only take if you don't actually move.

You don't get a move-equivalent action plus a partial action as your turn. You get either a standard action (which does not allow a 5-foot step), a full-round action (which allows a 5-foot step if the action itself doesn't include movement), or a partial action (which also allows a 5-foot step if the action doesn't include movement).

Can a monk or another character use an unarmed strike to deliver a spell with touch range? If so, how do you resolve the attack?

Yes, you can use an unarmed strike to deliver a touch spell. Since casting a spell is a standard action, you usually have to wait until your next turn to make the unarmed attack. Resolve the unarmed attack exactly the same way you resolve any other unarmed strike. The attacker has to beat the defender's Armor Class with all adjustments, including armor and shield, added in. (The attacker is trying to land a damaging blow, not just touch the opponent.) If the attacker doesn't have the Improved Unarmed Strike feat, the attack draws an attack of opportunity (striking for damage exposes the attacker to more risk than merely touching the opponent to deliver a spell). If the attack is a hit, the attacker deals unarmed damage and discharges the spell. If the attack is a miss, the attacker is still holding the charge.

All the item creation feats have prerequisites of "x spellcaster level." Do spellcaster levels from different spellcasting classes stack? In other words, is a Wiz4/Sor4 an 8th-level or 4th-level spellcaster?

Spellcasting levels don't stack; if a prerequisite is "x spellcaster" level, you need "x levels" in a spellcasting class to meet the prerequisite.

Say an 11th-level wizard has an Intelligence of 15. Can the wizard prepare a *teleport* spell (a 5th-level spell) enhanced with the Silent Spell metamagic feat and thus use a 6th-level spell slot that the character (thanks to low Intelligence) could not use to prepare a 6th-level spell?

MIKAL STARFLOWER: AXE-MASTER

Ranger: A half-elf ranger with 18 Dexterity in light or no armor can use throwing axes (light weapons for a half-elf) and the Point Blank Shot feat with her class-granted Ambidexterity and Two-Weapon Fighting feats to have +4/+4 to hit within 10 feet (+1 base, +4 Dex, +1 feat, -2 fighting with two weapons). She also has low-light vision for tracking humanoids at night and (unlike an elven ranger) no Constitution penalty to hit points.

THEY CALL ME "BULLSEYE" UNDERBOUGH

Sorcerer: A halfling sorcerer with darts, a 20 Dexterity, and the Point Blank Shot feat has a +8 attack bonus (+5 Dex, +1 size +1 race, +1 feat) when within 20 feet of a target (+6 within 30 ft., +5 within 40 ft.). Throw in the *true strike* spell, and he gets another +20 bonus to hit each round after he casts the spell.

Using a metamagic feat makes the spell occupy a spell slot of higher level, but it does not actually change the spell's level (except for Heighten Spell, which does increase the spell's level). So long as the wizard in question has enough Intelligence to cast the spell at its actual level (15 for the 5th-level *teleport* spell), the character can cast the metamagic spell. Note that the character doesn't have to use metamagic to use the 6th-level spell slot; the character can simply prepare any lower level spell in the slot.

If a character is paralyzed, but recovers during the same encounter, do you keep the same initiative or roll a new one?

If by "the same encounter" you mean the same battle in which the character was paralyzed, the character must delay if she's paralyzed during her turn, but her initiative number does not actually change until she recovers. The same is true for a magically held character or a character reduced to negative hit points. The character hasn't actually left the battle, she just didn't get to do anything when her turns came up.

If the character recovers before her turn in the initiative order, she can act normally during her turn, using her original initiative number. If the character recovers after her turn, she still can act, but she has delayed and her initiative drops accordingly.

There might be cases when a character really has effectively left the battle. For example, say a character fails a saving throw against a *hold person* spell and the rest of the combatants keep moving while fighting, leaving the *held* character behind. If the *held* character decides to rejoin the fray after the spell wears off, treat her as a new combatant. (See New Combatants Enter the Fray in Chapter 3 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.)

What happens when I'm using a personal range spell, such as *stoneskin*, and I take over a body using *magic jar*? What happens if I take over a body with *magic jar* and then cast a personal range spell?

A personal range spell goes where you go. When you take over a body with *magic jar*, any personal range spell you had running before the takeover goes with you and you can continue to use it in the body you have taken over. When you leave the body, all your personal range spell effects go with you, including any you might have cast while in the body you've taken over.

How many hit points do you have when you take over another body with a *magic jar* spell? What if the body you take over is damaged?

In the case of *magic jar*, hit points go with the body. When you possess a body, you have whatever hit points that body has at the time.

I AM BODDNOCK, CHAMPION OF JUSTICE. FEAR ME, INFIDELS!

Paladin: A gnome paladin with the Toughness feat and a 20 Constitution starts out with 18 hit points and (unlike a dwarf paladin) doesn't have a Charisma penalty. He also gets a +1 size bonus to AC, a +1 racial bonus against kobolds and goblinoids (common foes of paladins), a +4 dodge AC bonus against giants, and a few illusion spells when things get rough.

Why does *bull's strength* have a saving throw (albeit the harmless kind) when *cat's grace* and *endurance* don't?

It's an error. All three of these spells should have the same saving throw entry: Will negates (harmless).

Can a creature with a gaze attack—say, for purposes of discussion, a medusa—use its gaze attack when under the influence of a *change self* spell? *Alter self*? (The answer is obviously "no" when polymorphed, as the gaze is a supernatural ability.)

Change self and *alter self* do not prevent the use of supernatural abilities. Nevertheless, glamers can disrupt gaze attacks. You've got to be able to see a medusa's eyes or face to be subject to its gaze. An invisible medusa can't petrify you, and neither can a medusa who has assumed a form that's no longer recognizable as a medusa. Of course, if the medusa assumes a form that has a petrifying gaze attack of its own, the gaze still works. (A medusa masquerading as a basilisk can still petrify you.) You are correct about a *polymorphed* medusa; *polymorphed* creatures cannot use their supernatural abilities.

Dragon #268, page 25, says that a *wall of force* spell remains in place regardless of the caster's wishes unless he or she uses *dispel magic*. The description of the *wall of force* spell in the *Player's Handbook*, however, says *wall of force* is dismissable and that it is not subject to *dispel magic*. Which is right?

The *Player's Handbook* is right on both counts. *Wall of force* is dismissable, and it is impervious to *dispel magic*, even *dispels* from the *wall of force* caster. While you automatically succeed on dispel checks against spells you have cast yourself, a successful dispel check has no effect on a *wall of force*.

When using the granted power from the Luck domain, do you have to decide to make the reroll before you find out what the result is, or do you get to know whether you've failed or not before deciding to reroll? For example if I roll an 18, but I need at least 19, do I get to know that an 18 is a failure, or do I have to decide before then?

Technically, you must decide to reroll before you know whether you've succeeded or failed; that's why the power description says you've got to keep the reroll even if it's worse than the original roll. It's incumbent on the DM to allow a player at least a moment to decide whether to use the ability. If the DM accidentally blurts out the result immediately, it's okay to let the player reroll.

Can a *stoneskin* spell keep you from being poisoned? Say a giant scorpion stings me when I have a *stoneskin* spell, am I poisoned if the attack doesn't deal any damage because of the damage reduction from the spell?

Whenever damage reduction from any source completely negates the damage from an attack, it also negates most special effects that accompany the attack, such as injury-type poison (which is what a scorpion has), a monk's stunning ability, and injury-type disease. Damage reduction does not negate touch attacks, energy damage dealt along with an attack (such as fire damage from a fire elemental), or energy drains. Nor

does it affect poisons or diseases delivered by inhalation, ingestion, or contact. See the section on damage reduction in Chapter 3 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for more details.

The *continual flame* spell is listed as an Illusion (Figment). It provides real light. However, page 158 of the *Player's Handbook* says figments and glamers are unreal and cannot produce real effects. Specifically, they cannot illuminate darkness. Am I missing something, or is there an error?

There's an error. The *continual flame* spell is an Evocation [Light] spell, not an Illusion (Figment). The rest of the spell description is still accurate, however. The flame from a *continual flame* spell doesn't generate any heat, doesn't consume oxygen, cannot burn anything, and cannot be smothered or quenched.

I can use *locate object* to find a general item, such as a jewel. I can use it to find specific items. Can I use it to find particular types of items, such as an emerald worth at least 1,000 gp? The spell says that I need a clear mental image of a specific item to find it. Then it says I must have seen a unique item in person in order to locate it. Is there a difference between a specific item (requiring only a mental image) and a unique item (requiring one to have seen it with one's own eyes)?

The spell allows you to look for three different classes of objects:

General objects (Platonic objects): You can look for something such as a chair, a stairway, or a gem. If you do, you get the nearest object of the specified type.

Specific objects: The monetary value of a gem is somewhat arbitrary, and it won't suffice for a *locate object* spell. You can search for an emerald, or an emerald of a specific size and weight, and if you have the Knowledge (Gems) skill, the Craft (Gemcutting) skill, or maybe even the Appraise skill you probably know enough to specify the size or weight that corresponds to the gem value you want. If you just search for an emerald, you'll get the closest emerald, no matter what its size or weight. If you specify a size or weight, and you have a clear mental image of such an emerald, you'll get the closest emerald of that size or weight, but the spell will not find any other emeralds that might be within range. You cannot specify a range of sizes and weights, because that will not allow you to develop a clear mental picture of a single emerald.

Unique objects: You can look for a particular emerald (such as the one in the king's ring, for example), provided you've seen that particular emerald before. D

Attack Bonus Spells + Power Attack (+Cleave)

If you have Power Attack and are under the influence of a spell that gives you attack bonuses (*bull's strength, divine favor, divine power, enlarge, righteous might, Tenser's transformation, true strike,* and so on), it is to your benefit to take whatever plusses to attack you receive from the spell (up to your base attack value) and apply it to your damage, since those plusses are essentially "free." If you drop an opponent with that attack and you have Cleave, you can do the same thing again at the same damage bonus (this combination and Great Cleave are extremely lethal to 1- and 2-HD creatures).

In other words, if you get +4 Strength (and therefore +2 to hit and damage) from a *bull's strength* spell and +2 Strength (and therefore +1 to hit and damage) from an *enlarge* spell, taking -3 to hit with Power Attack cancels out the +3 to hit from the stacking Strength effects, but you end up with an additional +3 damage (not including the +2 and +1 damage you get directly from your increased Strength). You hit just as often as before, but a lot harder.

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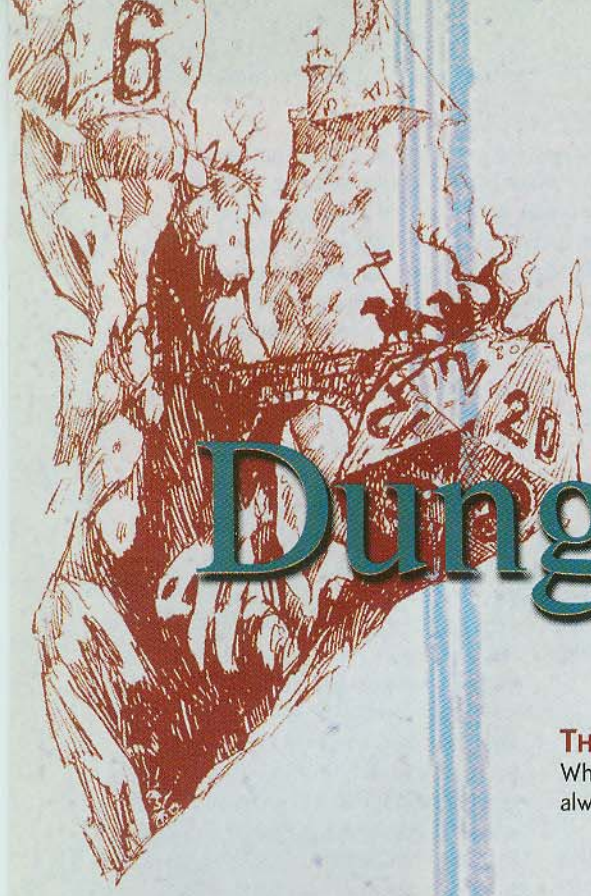

I've Got a Secret

Dungeoncraft

by Ray Winninger

The Second Rule of Dungeoncraft
Whenever you fill in a major piece of the campaign world, always devise at least one secret related to that piece.

What Is Dungeoncraft?
"Dungeoncraft" is an ongoing column that explores the fine art of Dungeon Mastering and offers an interesting "behind the scenes" look at the development of an actual D&D campaign. If you've missed any of the previous installments, you can find them on the Web at:
http://www.wizards.com/dragon

Every few months or so, I'll use this column to answer your questions about Dungeon Mastering, world building, and campaign development. (Questions about the rules and their interpretation are handled by Skip Williams in his "Sage Advice" column.) Send your questions to:

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Ever since I introduced the Second Rule of Dungeoncraft way back in Dragon #256, I've tried to stress the importance of keeping good secrets. It's difficult to imagine a successful D&D campaign without a whole web of interesting secrets at its heart. In most cases, a good campaign is like a good soap opera—it's the twists, turns, and unexpected revelations that keep the audience interested. Giving your players the opportunity to unravel big mysteries can give them a real sense of accomplishment, while simultaneously adding a lot of personality and depth to your campaign world.

Sadly, creating really interesting secrets can be tricky. I receive a lot of requests for tips on creating and using secrets in the fan mail I read each month. Unfortunately, creating appropriate secrets is a lot like swimming or riding a bike—written instructions aren't very useful; you have to learn by watching and doing.

After giving this topic some thought, I decided that the best way I can help is to present a bunch of sample secrets. Although it should be easy to fit the rough templates I'll provide directly into most campaigns, my real hope is that exposure to enough of these ideas will get your own creative juices flowing. Along the way, I'll briefly discuss the ideas I present and include a few notes on how such a secret might affect the campaign.

One general piece of advice to consider when creating secrets is to strive for the truly outrageous. In most cases, the more shocking the secret, the more effective it will prove in play. A tactic I sometimes employ is to introduce a fact or situation that seems impossible, then allow the players to uncover the information necessary to explain it. After the second or third time the players get to the bottom of such a mystery, you'll usually find that you've nicely peaked their sense of anticipation, insuring their interest in the game. (What's going to happen next, and how is he going to explain it this time?)

I've divided my examples into five simple categories: historical secrets, character secrets, divine secrets, geographical secrets, and just plain weird secrets. The first two kinds are covered this month.

HISTORICAL SECRETS

Shocking revelations about the hidden past of your campaign world can provide plenty of entertaining opportunities. Generally, this sort of secret not only gives your players something interesting to explore, it also conve-

niently fleshes out the history of your game world and provides springboards for several interesting adventures to come. The very best historical secrets give your players an opportunity to directly interact with the most important events that shaped the history of the game world, allowing them to feel like an important part of that history themselves.

Historical secrets can also serve as a great way to introduce exposition about the politics of your campaign. Uncovering the hidden truths that lie behind the alliance of two great kingdoms, for instance, should give the players interesting insights into how they might break that alliance.

1. Return of the Long-Dead Hero

Perhaps one of the long-dead heroes of your game world isn't really dead after all. Since this sort of secret is an obvious staple of comic books and soap operas, it needs to be well executed in order to be effective and interesting. A great deal rests on the quality of the explanation—how or why did the "dead" hero survive? Come up with a detailed or novel answer and you've just created a powerful secret.

My version might go something like this: I'll invent a famous king who waged war across an entire continent in order to unite all its peoples under a single benevolent rule. Ironically, it is believed that the king was killed by the last arrow shot during the final battle of the great campaign, just over thirty years ago. In truth, the king wasn't killed. After winning the final battle, he abandoned his armies and was never seen again. Confused by the king's sudden absence and fearful that their newly forged coalition would crumble in its wake, the king's advisors invented the story of his death and set about forging the new, united nation.

In reality, the king was concerned that his remarkable achievements were making him particularly susceptible to the dangerous sin of pride. In the end, he decided that taking up the throne after all his great military victories would constitute too many accomplishments for any one man. In order to "put himself back in his proper place," he resolved to abandon his armies shortly after his final victory and spend the rest of his life living as a humble beggar in his former capital city.

This secret might set you up for a series of adventures in which the players first discover that the king is still alive, then discover the king's whereabouts, and finally attempt to convince the king to return to his armies and lead them against a menace threatening the kingdom he created.

A GOOD CAMPAIGN IS LIKE A GOOD SOAP OPERA

2. A Secret Debt to Evil

This is a secret about a powerful and prosperous nation that overcame great odds to defeat a malevolent rival almost a century earlier. Unknown to just about everyone, the triumph came at a great price. During the final battle against their rivals, the rulers of the prosperous nation found themselves in desperate circumstances, and they were forced to employ the aid of a powerful demon to insure victory. In return for its services, the demon is entitled to the first daughter born to the ruling family every second generation. For the past one hundred years, the ruling family has secretly paid this price, each time carefully inventing a cover story to explain away the sudden death or disappearance of the princess.

During the campaign, the players might get their first inkling of this secret when they notice a strange outbreak of evil across the countryside. Eventually, they'll uncover the truth about the ruling family and the source of the evil outbreak—the current king is refusing to turn his daughter over to the demon, prompting the infernal creature to take revenge. In the end, of course, it's likely that the players will discover that the demon created the original conflict between the two nations as part of an elaborate plot to maneuver the royal family into accepting the pact. The second-generation daughters of this particular family have some mysterious value to the demon, nicely setting the stage for you to create yet another secret.

THE MORE SHOCKING THE SECRET, THE MORE EFFECTIVE IT WILL PROVE IN PLAY.

3. History Repeats Itself

This one is a bit stranger than the first two examples. Across the course of the campaign, the players will gradually glean more and more details about the past history of the setting. Once they've accumulated enough of these details, they'll start to realize that the history of the planet is one huge cycle that repeats itself according to a definitive pattern over and over again. For instance, maybe every 1,116 years two great nations go to war, the smaller of the two nations always wins after exactly 23,411 lives have been lost in the conflict, and exactly twelve years later, the victorious general always loses his life to unexpected treachery.

This secret is particularly valuable to the players because of the way they can use it to predict future events, allowing them to accomplish great things while simultaneously giving them the feeling that they are true "movers and shakers." It also nicely sets you up to create still more interesting secrets—what is the exact significance of the historical pattern, and how did it come into being?

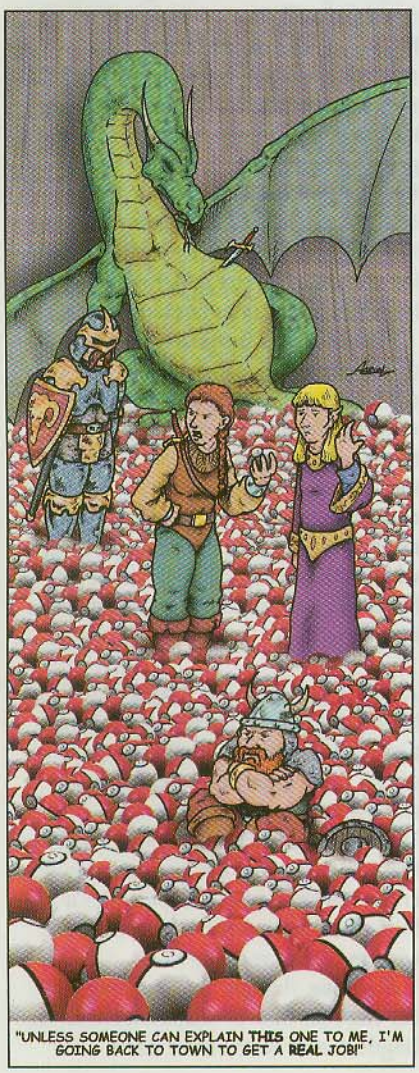
4. When Is a King Not a King?

Most D&D game worlds boast dynasties of great kings who have ruled wisely over a particular kingdom or empire for generations on end. Typically, the citizens of these kingdoms thank fortune that each successive generation always seems to produce a fitting heir who turns out to be as wise as all his ancestors.

Suppose, though, that the kings are not the real font of wisdom behind the kingdom and never have been.

Unknown to everyone, including the kings themselves, the king's hereditary sword has been secretly governing the affairs of state since the foundation of the kingdom many generations ago. The sword is intelligent and capable of subtly manipulating its wielders to insure just rule. Perhaps it even houses the intellect of the very first king, who had the sword forged because he couldn't stand the idea of giving up his kingdom after death.

There are a number of ways such a secret might become important during the campaign. If the sword is stolen, for instance, the whole kingdom might unravel until it can be returned. Another possibility is a newly-crowned king discovering the secret of the sword and deciding that he doesn't want to make use of its capabilities. After the king attempts to rid himself of the sword, the sword begins plotting his downfall and drifts from owner to owner, hoping to find someone who can depose the king.



"UNLESS SOMEONE CAN EXPLAIN THIS ONE TO ME, I'M GOING BACK TO TOWN TO GET A REAL JOB!"

CHARACTER SECRETS

Secrets about characters—both PCs and NPCs—provide another set of possibilities rich with opportunity. The classic character secret is a surprise revelation about a character's past, though the true possibilities are nearly limitless.

THE CLASSIC CHARACTER SECRET IS A SURPRISE REVELATION ABOUT A CHARACTER'S PAST

Character secrets are particularly useful for encouraging good roleplaying and prompting your players to examine their characters a bit more closely. Nothing adds depth to a character like a good secret, and deep characters enhance your campaign in all sorts of ways.

It's easiest to create secrets about NPCs since you completely control their backstories, mannerisms, and behaviors, but don't be afraid to occasionally create secrets about the PCs. After all, heroes who discover hidden details about their pasts are a staple of myth and legend. Of course, some players are likely to be more receptive to these "discoveries" than others. You'll occasionally encounter a player who likes to carefully control his characters and create every detail of the characters' histories himself. Fortunately, these folks are relatively rare and easy to spot. Your best bet is to avoid them altogether and save your secrets for a more appreciative audience.

1. The Unexpected Relationship

Even though this old chestnut has been parodied to death (thanks to Star Wars), it's still surprisingly effective. The bit, of course, is that one of the characters in the campaign is secretly related in some way to one of the other characters. Maybe an evil wizard turns out to be the long lost brother of one of the PCs, or an NPC beggar discovers that he is actually a member of the royal family and the rightful heir to a throne.

Because secrets such as these can be kind of goofy if incorrectly executed, it's important to get them right. First of all, such secrets are rarely effective unless a long period of time elapses between the point at which everyone meets the two characters in question and the instant the hidden relationship is uncovered. In other words, don't introduce a brand new NPC in an adventure and reveal that the NPC is actually a PC's mother by adventure's end. The revelation will be much more powerful if you delay it for several adventures to come. Give everyone a chance to get acquainted with the new character and a chance to think they know her before you spring your big surprise.

It's equally important to devise a clever explanation for why the relationship has remained a secret for so long. Silly plot devices like amnesia and "stolen by gypsies" generally won't cut it without lots of additional details to shore them up and make them interesting. A workable example might go something like this: Suppose you've decided that one of the PCs is secretly the son of the evil baron who serves as the master villain in your campaign. All his life, the PC has assumed that he is actually the son of the good baron who is a lifelong foe of the villain. This mystery is explained by a strange pact the two barons forged long ago. In a desperate attempt to keep the peace between their two armies, the barons decided to secretly swap sons—each would raise the other's child, making it difficult for either baron to attack the other without risking harm to his own son. Although the pact served its purpose for many years, the whole scheme finally went awry when the biological son of the good baron was killed by the PC during a craven attempt to assassinate the good duke, his "father's" lifelong enemy. Over the years, both barons became very fond of their charges and grew to think of them as their own sons. The evil baron now blames the PC for the death of his adopted son and has sworn revenge.

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2. I'm a Murderer?

This is a great surprise to pull on a good-aligned player character. Every now and then, the PC should receive strange looks and such until one day a group of inquisitors finally arrives to confront him. The inquisitors have been pursuing the PC for several months and claim to have eyewitness evidence that the PC committed some unimaginably horrible crime. The campaign then proceeds for a time like a crime novel, with the PC and his companions struggling to prove his innocence, but becoming frustrated at each turn. If you orchestrate things properly, the remaining PCs might even begin to doubt their friend themselves. Things finally take the ultimate turn for the worse when some sort of unassailable method of establishing guilt (possibly magical) proves that the PC did, in fact, commit the crime even though he has no memory of it.

From this point, there are a number of ways you might explain the discrepancy, most involving magical mind control or similar means. My own explanation might go something like this: The PC is not whom he believes to be and never has been. In fact, the PC is a highly trained assassin from a land notorious for producing the most skilled assassins in the world. After performing a particularly difficult mission (the crime he is accused of), the PC was forced to drink a magical potion to escape. This potion effectively made the PC an entirely different person, giving him new memories and a new alignment. Once he had quaffed the potion, it was possible for the PC to evade various magical spells (like *detect evil*) that might have prevented his escape from the target's home. Even if he was captured and magically compelled to tell the truth, the PC would have no incriminating memories. Naturally, part of the plan called for the assassin's colleagues to recapture him at some point and restore his old memories, but that never happened. In fact, maybe the PCs first get wind of this secret when they foil the assassins' seemingly mysterious attempts to recapture their old colleague.

Once the scheme is in motion, of course, the PC is in quite a pickle. As a consequence, maybe you should wait until all the PCs have gained a few experience levels before springing this little gem. That should give them plenty of options when they deal with the fallout.

THE PC IS NOT WHOM HE BELIEVES TO BE AND NEVER HAS BEEN

That wraps up another installment. Join me here in thirty days for "I've Got a Secret, Part II."

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WITH PHIL AND DIXIE

HI-HO KIDS! TODAY WE'LL TALK ABOUT HOW TO INVEST YOUR TREASURE IN A SECURE IRA—
I THINK NOT YOU PITIFUL GEEK!!
WHA—DIXIE?! IS THAT YOU?
OH, YEAH.
BUT... WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
SIMPLE, FOOL! I'M TIRED OF BEING THE 'GIRL SIDEKICK': FROM NOW ON, I'M GOING TO BE THE EVIL VILLAIN!!
YOU'RE CHANGING ALIGNMENT?! BUT WHY?!
ARE YOU KIDDING?! THE PERKS ARE FANTASTIC!
BETTER HAIR—
BIGGER BUST—
BITCHIN' OUTFITS—
PLUS I GET MY OWN MINIONS!
AND A SECRET LAIR!
AND BETTER DIALOGUE! NOW NO ONE CAN STOP ME!
BWAHAHAHA
MINION 12
AND YOU I WILL ALLOW TO LIVE — BECAUSE YOUR FEEBLE ATTEMPTS TO STOP ME WILL ONLY AMUSE ME.
AND NOW—
FAREWELL!
FOOM!
©P Foglio '00
um... FIRST... COUNT YOUR TREASURE—
AHAHAHA-! STOLE IT!
HELP.

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"It would be a damn shame if you spent your $60 for the month of July on Diablo II and let Icewind Dale pass you by." ~ Daily Radar

"(Icewind Dale) is well suited for fans of Black Isle Studios' previous games, fans of classic hack-and-slash AD&D computer games, and anyone looking for an action-packed role-playing game with a lot of depth." ~ GameSpot

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